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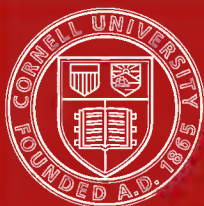


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# FRAGMENTS FROM REIMARUS

CONSISTING OF

BRIEF CRITICAL REMARKS ON THE OBJECT OF  
JÈSUS AND HIS DISCIPLES AS SEEN IN  
THE NEW TESTAMENT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

G. E. LESSING.

EDITED BY THE

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## PREFACE BY THE EDITOR.

THE name of Reimarus is scarcely known in this country beyond a very select circle of English students, while his writings, so far as I know, have never been popularly known, nor frequently quoted by English commentators. The reason for this will perhaps become apparent to any one who will take the trouble, or give himself the pleasure, of reading this book. Reimarus is too thorough, too uncompromising, too faithful to his task, to suit the present attitude of mind and heart towards the central figure of the orthodox religion.

The following pages have been translated—truly as a work and labour of love—from Lessing's *Fragments by the Unknown of Wolfenbüttel*. The translator kindly permits me to share the honour of presenting these *Fragments* to the notice of English readers. With the actual work of translation I have had nothing to do; my part has been only editorial, and limited to a few modifications of expression, which have not altered the sense.

The method of criticism adopted by Reimarus commends itself most of all by its extreme lucidity and fidelity to the Gospel records. He teaches in such a manner as to reach even the most untutored mind ; and so far is he from forcing upon us his own interpretations that he habitually makes the New Testament speak for itself, and every charge which he has been compelled to bring against the founders of Christianity is sustained and proved by their own testimony. I have not yet seen in the English language a work on this subject carrying such irresistible force of argument.

A complaint might be made that the present work is, as its title declares, only fragmentary ; but although a complete work from the master hand of Reimarus would doubtless have been of very great value, yet there is an advantage, not to be despised, in brevity and conciseness, especially when the subject itself is more calculated to weary than to refresh the mind. These paragraphs from the pen of the great German thinker are each and all well-aimed and powerful blows, and he must be a brave man who will attempt to place a shield between them and the orthodox faith. I venture to say there is only one method of neutralising or diminishing the force of this attack — the method of



*explaining away*, of manipulating texts so as to make their sense the exact opposite of the natural meaning of the words. Such a method is not quite so much in favour as it once was, and somehow it has ceased to perform those brilliant feats of legerdemain which used to win so much applause. Reimarus either speaks truly or falsely; he quotes the New Testament either accurately or inaccurately; he either represents Jesus and the Apostles in their true light, as seen in the New Testament itself, or he has grossly misrepresented them. These are the questions for readers and critics to settle. They have their New Testament at hand, and can compare its statements with those of Reimarus. No controversy was ever reduced within such reasonable and easy limits, or had its terms made more definite and intelligible.

After a careful and candid perusal of this book, the reader will, I trust, join me in heartily thanking the translator for giving to our English students a critical work of such rare interest and such exceptional value.

CAMDEN HOUSE, DULWICH,  
*July, 1879.*



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# INTRODUCTORY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *Brief Sketch of the Life of Reimarus.\**

HERMANN SAMUEL REIMARUS was born on the 22nd December, 1694, at Hamburg. His father, Nikolaus, the son of a clergyman of Stolzenberg, near Stettin, was a native of Kiel, where he had studied theology. He married the daughter of a distinguished patrician family of the name of Wetken. He was so good a man and so accomplished a scholar that his influence upon the education and character of his son, whom he taught almost entirely until he had attained his twelfth year, must have been a very important one. Reimarus left his father's house to become a pupil of the renowned John Albrecht Fabricius, whose daughter he eventually married. At the age of sixteen he left the Johanneum for the Gymnasium, and in the year 1714, when he was twenty years old, he entered the University of Jena. Theology was his favourite

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\* Translated and abridged from Strauss's "Life of Reimarus."

study, but he also occupied himself with great energy and perseverance in classics and philosophy, and in 1716 became adjunct of the philosophical faculty at Wittemberg. In the years 1720 and 1721, to gain further knowledge, he journeyed to Holland and England, returning thence to his former post at Wittemberg, which he retained until the year 1723, when he was appointed Rector of the School at Wismar. Four years later, on the death of G. Edzard at Hamburg, the Professorship of the Hebrew and other Oriental languages became vacant. The salary of this appointment was not remunerative; but out of attachment to his native place Reimarus applied for and easily obtained it, resisting other more advantageous offers, particularly a brilliant invitation to become the successor of Gesner at Göttingen.

For Reimarus, who outshone his learned father-in-law, Fabricius, in wit, argument and profound knowledge, it was a very modest occupation to teach the elements of Hebrew, and he could only pursue the higher branches of study, such as Biblical antiquities, criticism, etc., with a limited number of pupils. Yet he was as zealous and faithful in the performance of the duties of his calling as if he had not been fitted for a position worthy of unusual talents and acquirements. Besides philology, mathematics, philosophy, and theology, few men were so well versed in political and historical literature, husbandry, and political economy. He also had a great love for natural history and

natural sciences, to which he added many valuable contributions. But as years rolled on, the study of philosophy left all others in the background. Without making authorship the occupation of his life, Reimarus has left many invaluable works, and one upon each of his favourite subjects. He was anything but a dull bookworm. His great object seemed to bring science closer to life, to bring men of science nearer to men of the world. He was modest without being bashful, sympathetic without being vain or importunate, and notwithstanding his innate dignity of manner, a lively and charming companion.

In his later years he enjoyed gathering around him a circle of men who conversed with unrestrained sociality upon scientific and useful subjects, and exchanged one with another their experiences, discoveries, views, and judgments.

Also the domestic life of Reimarus was exemplary. His wife, a daughter worthy of Fabricius, gave him seven children, only three of whom, a son and two daughters, survived him. No happier, more united, or more respected family could be found than his; and long after his death the house of Reimarus, occupied by his accomplished unmarried daughter Elise, and his son, Doctor A. Reimarus, remained one of the scientific centres of Hamburg.

Esteemed both as scholar and as man, honoured and respected far and near, Reimarus, though not of robust constitution, reached the comparatively advanced age of 72. On the 19th of February,

1768, he invited a number of his most intimate friends to his house to join his mid-day meal, and on that occasion was as cheerful and amiable as ever; but at parting he told them with solemn certainty this would be the last time they should meet together. Three days afterwards he became seriously ill, and expired peacefully at 3 a.m. on the 1st March.

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The above extract was taken by Strauss from an interesting and valuable memorial written by Reimarus's friend, Büsch, Professor of Mathematics.\*

In this memorial, the *Fragments* published a few years later by Lessing are not alluded to, and it is very possible that Büsch may not have known of their existence. That Reimarus imparted their contents in strict confidence to two or three of his friends, among whom was the well-known poet Brockes, we know to have been the case through his son, J. A. Reimarus, but whether Büsch was among these confidential friends it is impossible to say. Even if he were, he may have considered it his duty not to mention them; for Reimarus used to say that the time had not come for him "to bring forward openly his theological denials"; so after

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\* *Memoriæ immortali H. S. Reimari linguarum orientalium in Gymnasio Hamburgensi per XLI. annos professoris, qualescunque hoc monumentum officii et pietatis causâ posuit J. G. Büsch, Math. P., etc., in Gymnasio Hamburgensi. 33 fol.*



his death, his friends considered it a pious duty towards the departed, not to expose his memory to humiliation, to accusations of heresy from the clergy, and revilings from the multitude.

Lessing only made the acquaintance of Reimarus during the last year of his life, when his health was beginning to fail, and therefore did not know him intimately; but afterwards a great friendship sprang up between Lessing and the son and daughter of Reimarus; and it was from Elise Reimarus that, after much difficulty and persuasion, he obtained possession of the precious manuscripts of the *Fragments* with leave to publish them; but only on promising that he would not reveal the name of the author; for the children of Reimarus dreaded the odium which thereby might be brought upon their father's name. Lessing published the *Fragments* one after another in 1774.

Two of Lessing's most intimate friends, Nicolai and Mendelsohn, had strongly advised him not to publish them; but he was not to be dissuaded from his purpose. After a time the general belief that the *Fragments* had been written by Reimarus became so strong, that at last Elise began to fear that Lessing must have betrayed her secret, and he found himself obliged to write to her brothers to deny the imputation. It was not until 1814 that all doubt on the subject was brought to an end by Dr. A. Reimarus who, in a letter to the library at Göttingen, declared his father to have been the author of the *Fragments*, which, had he lived to

complete them, were to have been gathered into one book under the title, *An Apology for the Reasonable Believers in God.*

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The following extracts throw great light on the mind and heart of Reimarus, and religious people will be more than gratified by the disclosure of his own earnest and intense Faith in the Living God:—

“ But God was also to be looked upon as a Judge, and here a new difficulty presented itself. Reimarus had too much sense of truth to endeavour to explain away by artificial demonstration the punishment of eternal Hell fire. If salvation was alone to be found in the name of Jesus, if all who did not believe in him were to be everlastingly damned, and as this creed must have been handed down from the sayings of Jesus himself, it followed that ninety-nine hundredths of the human race, those who either had never heard of Christ or of salvation to be obtained through him, or those who had not been able to convince themselves of it, were unmercifully sentenced, after this short life, to everlasting torment; and this not for the sake of making them better, but to punish them, and to satisfy God’s unquenchable wrath, for a sin committed in the beginning of Creation, and a sin of which they themselves were guiltless. This seemed to banish all Divine perfection, all that was lovable and noble in God, and transformed Him into the likeness of a satanic and hideous demon.”

“ ‘I confess,’ said Reimarus, ‘that *this* doubt was the first which rooted itself in my mind, and so immovably, that in spite of all my efforts, I never was able to conquer it.’ ”—*Strauss's Life of Reimarus*, p. 260.

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“ Even if we granted all these miracles to be true, they would not of themselves be able to support offensive teachings or actions. Contradictions cannot be dissolved by any miracle, and vices cannot miraculously become virtues. But as the truth of these miracles has not yet been established, why should we make such tottering facts the basis of all religion? ”—*Ib.*, p. 262.

“ ‘That which is absurd and impossible,’ says Reimarus, ‘that which in any other history would be called falsehood, deception, outrage, and cruelty, cannot be made reasonable, righteous, and true by the added words : Thus saith the Lord.’ ”

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Reimarus originally wrote the *Fragments*, as he said, “ from time to time, to pacify his mind ; for, after doubts had arisen and troubled him for several years, he resolved to write them carefully down, so as to look them well in the face, and see whether they were of sufficient weight to give the matter a decisive issue.”

“ The first thing that struck him, and the first conclusion he came to, was that the Bible is not a book of religious instruction or a catechism.”—*Ib.*, p. 264.

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“When still in their cradles, the children of men, like born slaves, are forced to enlist as soldiers under a particular little flag, so that if they eventually would free themselves from this bondage they can be accused and punished as deserters.”

“The idea of God, as the most perfect of beings, existed full and warm in the heart of Reimarus, as we see by the following words:—‘Far be it from Thee, great Judge of the World, most lovable, most kind, most charitable, most merciful God, to pronounce so unjust a sentence upon the poor creatures Thou hast created!’

“‘How would such conduct compare with that of the most perfect of men? How could the likeness of the most impure, the most malignant enemy of God and man, be represented in a more hideous form?’”—*Ib.*, p. 262.

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## CHAPTER II.

### *Second part of Fragment on the Object of Jesus and His Disciples.*

#### SECTION I.

WE will now, however, step nearer and more directly to the subject in question, and examine both systems according to the sayings and doings of Jesus himself, so far as they are handed down to us. It is evident that with regard to the old system, all depends upon whether the evangelists, in their history of Jesus, left unintentionally and through sheer carelessness, a few remaining traces of the reasons which influenced them at first in attributing to their master the object of becoming a worldly deliverer of Israel. Whereas, with regard to the new system of a spiritual deliverer of mankind all depends, as the apostles themselves distinctly own, upon whether Jesus really arose after his death and ascended into Heaven, which latter event the disciples declare that they themselves witnessed, asserting that they saw him, touched him, and spoke with him.\* In this chapter we will consider the first, and in the following one, the second

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\* The apostles do *not* declare this themselves.—EDITOR.

of these systems. We have now to deal with a matter which the evangelists have taken great pains to conceal from us (as I have recently shown), and for this reason we shall require the most careful attention; but as the evangelists did not seek to conceal that they looked upon Jesus as a worldly deliverer of Israel up to the time of his death; and as the Jews were well aware that such had been their constant belief, it could not well have been possible for them utterly to destroy and banish all traces of their former system from their history of Jesus. These traces we will now endeavour to discover.

## SECTION II.

If it were true that in commanding repentance and conversion to be preached, the object of Jesus was, that men should believe in him as a spiritual saviour: if it were also true that his desire was by his death and suffering alone to deliver man, he nevertheless knew that the Jews did not expect a saviour of this kind, and that they had no idea of any other than a worldly deliverer of Israel, who was to release them from bondage and build up a glorious worldly kingdom for them. Why, then, does Jesus so plainly send to announce in all the towns, schools, and houses of Judea, that the kingdom of Heaven is near at hand? For this signified that the kingdom of the deliverer, or of the Messiah, was about to begin. He knew that if the

people believed his messengers, they would look for a worldly king, and would attach themselves to him with the conviction that he was this king; because, unless they received further and better instruction, they could have no other conception of the kingdom of Heaven or kingdom of God, or of the joyful message, or of any faith in the same, than that which they had learnt according to the popular meaning of the words, and to the prevailing impression of them. Ought not Jesus, then, before all things, to have endeavoured, through his apostles as heavenly messengers, to help the ignorant out of their coarse illusion, and thus to have directed their faith, repentance, and conversion towards the right object? For if the people only repented and were converted for the sake of enjoying happiness and glory in the kingdom of the Messiah, according to their delusion, their repentance, conversion and faith were not of the right sort. But Jesus did not convey to them any better idea of himself. We know this—first, because it is nowhere asserted that he did so; and secondly, because he chose for his messengers men who were themselves under the common impression, which impression had not been removed for a better one.

Jesus then must have been well aware that by such a plain announcement of the kingdom of Heaven, he would only awaken the Jews to the hope of a worldly Messiah; consequently, this must have been his object in so awakening them. As

regards the sending out of the apostles on their mission, we must suppose, either that Jesus did or did not know, what their impression of the kingdom of Heaven was. In the first case, it is clear that his object must have been to rouse the Jews to the expectation of a speedy worldly deliverance, because he employed messengers whom he knew to have no other belief, and who therefore could not preach a different one. In the second case, if he did not know their impression, he must still have guessed them to be under the universally prevailing one, and so ought to have enlightened and instructed the disciples until they abandoned their delusion, and were fully convinced of the truth of his real object, in order that they might not propagate a false gospel. But it is evident that the disciples, both then and afterwards, retained the delusion, or the belief, in a worldly deliverer of Israel through the Messiah, and were not converted to any other. Jesus, nevertheless, sends them to preach the kingdom of Heaven, and to become the teachers of others; therefore he must have approved of the prevailing belief among the disciples and people, and it must have been his object to encourage and circulate it throughout Judea. This action on the part of Jesus cannot be justified. In sending such missionaries, he could have had no other object than to rouse the Jews in all parts of Judea, who had so long been groaning under the Roman yoke, and so long been preparing for the hoped-for deliverance, and to induce them to flock to Jerusalem.



## SECTION III.

With this intention,\* the rest of the actions of Jesus agree.

His cousin, John the Baptist, had already sharpened the ears of the people, and although his words had been rather dark, he had still pointed out pretty distinctly that it was upon Jesus they should build their hopes. At the same time, John is by way of *not knowing* Jesus, and acts as though he only became aware of his existence through divine revelation. He speaks to the people:—"I knew him not until he was revealed to Israel, therefore am I come to baptise with water. . . . I knew him not, but He who sent me to baptise with water, the same spake unto me saying: He upon whom thou seest the Spirit descend and remain, the same is he who baptises with the Holy Spirit; and I have seen this and bear witness that *this* one is the son of God." *Twice*, then, John openly says that he did not know Jesus before his baptism.

But were they not cousins? Were their mothers not intimate friends, who visited each other? Did not Jesus, when a boy, often go up to Jerusalem with his relations and friends, so that John, who was about his own age, and on the same road, must surely have kept up his acquaintance

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\* Namely, that of establishing his worldly kingdom.

and cousinly relationship? Why then will they not know each other before the people? I tried to find an apology for this, by supposing that John did not wish altogether to deny that he knew his cousin personally, but wished only to convey that until the baptism, he knew him not as the Christ or Messiah, "whose shoe," as he says, "he was not worthy to untie." But the evangelist Matthew has deprived me of this idea, for according to his version, John acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah *before* the baptism. When Jesus came out of Galilee to be baptised, John strongly opposes his intention, saying, "I have need to be baptised by thee, and comest thou to *me*?" So he *must* have known Jesus before the baptism, not only very well *personally*, but it would appear also as one by whom he himself needed to be baptised, that is by the Holy Spirit—which was what the Messiah was expected to do. This clearly contradicts the former version, and betrays the concerted card. The cousins knew each other well, the one was aware of the other's object and intention. They perform extraordinary actions at one and the same time, by which the one furthers the purpose of the other. John announces that the kingdom of Heaven is at hand, that the Messiah is in their midst, but that they know him not. Jesus comes to John to be made known as such, through him. Then they begin to praise each other\* before the people.

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\* The literal translation is "make themselves great."

Jesus says: "John is a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, he is Elias, or the forerunner of the Messiah; among all born of women, there is none greater than he." John says of Jesus that he is the Christ, the son of God, that he will baptise with the Holy Spirit, and that he, John, is not worthy to carry his shoes or to loosen them. John pretends to receive his revelation at the baptism. He sees the heavens open, and the spirit fly down in the shape of a dove. He hears a "Bathkol," a "filiam vocis," or voice from Heaven, which cries, "This is my dear son, in whom I have pleasure." I believe I have reverted elsewhere to the fact that not one of those who stood around John and Jesus saw or heard anything. John was only carrying out his preconcerted plan, acting as though in an ecstasy he saw a prophetic vision, and as though he heard a voice from Heaven sounding in his ears.

The Jews were bound to believe that a prophet had seen and heard that which none of the bystanders had seen and heard, and at that time, they were accustomed to be convinced by a so-called Bathkol or "voice from Heaven," but this "voice from Heaven," among the Israelites, was, according to the confession of all sensible theologians, nothing but pre-arranged trickery and deception. John made use then of representations and inventions to further the design of Jesus, and Jesus was perfectly well aware that he did so. Accordingly they endeavour to carry out their intention by using the same manner of speech and the same manner of

teaching. John begins to preach: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Soon afterwards, Jesus begins to preach, saying: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." And as soon as he obtains disciples, he sends them all over Judea to spread about the same words. In announcing this, Jesus does not attempt to deprive the Jews of their delusion of a worldly and bodily deliverer any more than does John. They both allow the people to connect the old conception of a "kingdom of Heaven" or "kingdom of the Messiah" with their words. Had John, as messenger, begun by eradicating this fancy from the minds of men, Jesus might, without further declaration, have depended upon them; but as this deeply-rooted idea was allowed to be retained, and was encouraged by John as well as by Jesus and his disciples, neither John nor Jesus could have had any other object than that of awakening the people to the speedy arrival of the long-hoped-for deliverer, and of making them eager for his coming. It was for this purpose that they preached repentance, for the Jews believed that if they only repented really and truly, God would allow the Messiah to come and release them from their misery, their bondage, and their oppressors, and would establish among them a magnificent kingdom, like unto David's. This "preparation by earnest repentance" could not be otherwise interpreted by the Jews, nor could it have been intended by Jesus and John that they should otherwise interpret it. If, indeed, at the present

day, a Jew expected his worldly Messiah, and wished to announce his coming, he would, in accordance with the universal teaching of the Jewish Church, preach no other preparation for it than that of earnest repentance and reform. For this very reason, Jesus wished to prove that all those who had been before him, and had given themselves out as deliverers of the people, were not the right ones, that they were thieves and murderers, who, by unlawful violence, instead of exhortations to repentance, thought to accomplish their purpose. The saviour, whom the Jews expected, was to resemble their first deliverer from bondage, Moses, inasmuch as he was to be a great prophet, and was to perform many great miracles: these being, according to the orthodox church, the acknowledged and proper signs by which the expected Messiah was to be recognised, Jesus preaches and teaches as a prophet and performs miracles. The people could not banish from their minds that these were the signs by which they might know the deliverer. The actions of Jesus strengthened them in the belief, that like unto their first saviour, who had been a wonderful prophet, so this one was the other saviour who, through like miracles, would release them from like bondage and build up the kingdom of Israel. It was because of this that they said, alluding to the miracles and teachings of Jesus: "Thou art truly the prophet who should come into the world," after which they wanted to make him king. But Jesus slipped away from them

and escaped to a mountain. It is remarkable that he did not seize this opportunity of reproving the people, of assuring them that they were mistaken, and that he had come for a very different purpose. This would have been most necessary if Jesus really had had another object in view, and wished the people to think so. As it was, they could not do otherwise than cling to their convictions with regard to him. But it was not his intention to allow himself to be made a king in a desert place, and by a common rabble, such as then surrounded him. Neither the time nor the place suited him. His thoughts were bent upon a grand entry into the city of Jerusalem, at the Passover, a time when all Israelites throughout Judea would be assembled there, and when it would be conducted in a festive manner, and when, by the united voices of the populace he would be proclaimed King of the Jews.

Much in the same manner Jesus acted with regard to making known his miracles. He forbids them to be mentioned where it was impossible that they should remain secret, on purpose to make the people all the more eager to talk about them. The leper was to tell *no one*, and yet he was to show himself to the priest as a witness. The blind men were to take heed lest they divulged that they had received their sight, and yet everybody had heard them calling after him in the street for help. When large crowds followed him, and he had healed some of their sick, he tells the people to beware of mak-

ing it known. When he was much pressed by the throng, and he cast out devils before all eyes, he tells the people to take care it should not be known. When he had awakened the maiden of twelve years from her death-sleep in a house full of people, who were all anxiously waiting to see whether he would make good his words, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," he again commands that none are to know or hear of what he had done; and when they brought him a deaf and dumb man, he takes him and returns him to the people, speaking and hearing, and desires that no one is to be told. It appears to me that he who tells or shows anything even to single persons, one after another, on condition that they do not repeat it, might reasonably be accused of folly, for supposing that others would keep secret that which he cannot himself conceal; but he who requires silence from numerous persons upon what they have witnessed, I am inclined to think, has the intention of making them the more eager to spread the news. And so it was in this case. The more he forbade them, so much the more they proclaimed it.

At another time, he himself commands that his miracles *are* to be made known, and when the disciples of John come to him with the question—"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"—he publishes his miracles before all the world, that they might conclude him to be the real Messiah: "Tell John what you see and hear. The blind recover their sight, the lame walk, the

lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the Gospel is preached to the poor, and blessed are they who shall not be offended because of me."

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## SECTION VI.

Jesus continues to pursue the same course with regard to his main object, viz., that of being recognised as the Christ or Messiah. His cousin had already announced him, and now he himself distinctly acknowledges that he is the expected man, and sends his disciples to spread this gospel in all directions. On another occasion he reveals himself in very dry words to the Samaritan woman, and she immediately proclaims in the town that she has found the Messiah; upon which the inhabitants flock out to see him. He also acknowledges himself to be the Christ before the High Priest and the Synhedrion and before Pilate, and yet here and there forbids himself to be mentioned as such, even by his disciples. Of the kingdom of Heaven, Jesus speaks to the people in parables, out of which they could gather what they pleased. But he adds a sprinkling here and there of the great power which has been given to him, and of the seat of glory upon which he will sit and do judgment. He tells his disciples that he will bestow upon them a kingdom, as his Father has bestowed one on him, that they shall eat and drink at his table in his kingdom, and sit upon twelve seats and judge the



twelve tribes of Israel. The disciples had previously been asking him, saying: "See, we have left all and followed thee, what reward shall we have for this?" Jesus answered as above, adding: "and whosoever leaves houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my name's sake, the same shall receive all back an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life." Thus he promised them, as soon as his splendid kingdom should commence, a judgeship and power over the twelve tribes of Israel, and a hundred times as many houses, fields, &c., as they had left. All this doubtless referred to a worldly kingdom, and confirmed the necessary opinion which the disciples were quite ready to adopt. At length, when he imagined that the apostolic wanderings, his own teachings and miracles during the last two years, had sufficiently prepared and inclined the people to accept him and retain him as their expected Messiah, he fixes upon the time of the Easter festival, because he well knew that all Judea would then be assembled at Jerusalem. He chooses an ass with a foal in order to ride in state into the city, and appear as though he were the king of whom it was written: "Behold thy king cometh to thee." The apostles now thought that the kingdom was really about to commence. They busy themselves, assisted by some of the people, in spreading clothes upon the road, in strewing palms, and in crying "Hosanna to the son of David," that is to say, "Hail to the king, the Messiah who shall sit upon the throne of

David ; blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord." In this fashion he rides through the gates into the city of Jerusalem, upon which there ensues a crowd, an uproar, and the whole town is thrown into a state of excitement. This extraordinary public procession, which was not only tolerated by Jesus, but had been diligently encouraged by him, could not have been aimed at anything but a worldly kingdom. He wished that all the people of Israel who were there gathered together should unanimously proclaim him King.

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## SECTION VII.

It is possible that Jesus may not have felt quite comfortable as to the result of this undertaking, and that he may have previously told his disciples that he must be ready to suffer and to die. But these were elated with hope, they promised to support and not to forsake him, even should they die with him. So the attempt was ventured upon. Jesus takes his seat upon the ass, he allows royal honours to be done to him, he makes a public entry, and as this appears in some measure to succeed, he goes straight to the temple, where the High Court of Justice was wont to be held ; he lays aside his gentleness, begins a disturbance, and commits acts of violence, like one who suddenly considers himself possessed of worldly power. He overturns the

tables of the money-changers, takes a scourge and drives the buyers and sellers and dealers in doves into the outer court of the temple. Then he performs some miracles inside, and teaches. Early on the following day he delivers a sharp harangue against those Pharisees and scribes who sit on the seat of Moses, that is to say, the members of the High Court of Justice, the magistrates and the Synhedrion. He then publicly declares himself to be the Christ, and that he alone is their Lord and master. He abuses the Pharisees and learned Scribes of whom the senate is composed, calling them *hypocrites, who close the gates of the kingdom of Heaven, who devour widows' houses, who are blind guides, fools, whited sepulchres, murderers of the prophets, serpents, and a generation of vipers.* At last he concludes, telling them that they will see him no more until they all cry, "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord," as the apostles had cried before. Now is not this inciting the people to rebellion? Is not this stirring them up against the government? Was not this saying as much to them as "Down with the senate, down with the magistrates, who are nothing but blind guides, hypocrites, and unjust men; they are only a hindrance to the kingdom of the Messiah. One is your master, even I, and you shall henceforth not see my face until you proclaim me the Christ who is come to you in the name of the Lord."

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## SECTION VIII.

Thus then peeps out from the histories of the evangelists their true old notion of a worldly deliverer; and if we follow the conduct of Jesus up to the exhibition of his entry and the acclamation, "Hail to the son of David," we can see clearly enough that all the other circumstances attached to the later accepted creed of a Holy Saviour are inconsistent with this sequel to the teaching and behaviour of Jesus. For what was the meaning of this festive procession and cry of "Hail to the king?" What was the meaning of the violence and interruption of order in the Temple? What was the meaning of the seditious speech to the people against the High Council? Why were they stimulated to recognize him alone as their master? Jesus here shows plainly enough what his intention was, but then this was the *actus criticus* and *decretorius*—the act which was to give the successful turn to the whole undertaking, and upon which everything depended. Had the people in Jerusalem followed him and joined in proclaiming him king as the apostles did, he would have had all Judea on his side, the High Court of Justice would have been overthrown, and Jesus, together with his seventy chosen disciples, would have been placed in the Synhedrion instead of the Pharisees and the learned Scribes. Jesus had reckoned too confi-

dently upon the approval of the people. John the Baptist, who was to have supported the movement, had been imprisoned and beheaded. Jesus had expected favourable results from the sending about of the apostles, and imagined after they had traversed all the towns of Judea, that the Son of Man might venture to declare himself. The vulgar and ignorant flocked indeed to Jesus, they liked to hear his parables ; his moral teachings were more palatable to them than those of the Pharisees ; many also hoped to be cured of their diseases by him ; but this was insufficient for the main object. No man of distinction, of education, no Pharisee, only the common rabble, had as yet followed Jesus. The conviction of the reality of his miracles could not then have been very strong. Had it been so, more powerful adherents would not have been wanting. We are told by the evangelists that here and there Jesus could not perform any miracles because the people would not believe in him, and that he reproves whole towns (Chorazin and Bethsaida, where he is supposed to have performed *most* miracles) because of their want of faith ; and when the Pharisees and learned Scribes of the High Council ask him to justify himself by a miracle, he refuses, and begins to scold instead. If a single miracle had been performed publicly, convincingly, and undeniably by Jesus before all the world on the day of the great festival, men are so constituted that all would have joined him ; but how very few Jews of any worth or standing were on his side is evident

from the fact that, after the first shouting of his disciples and some of the crowd was over, no one else continued the cry "Hail to the son of David." It is probable that the people might also have taken the disorderly and violent actions committed by Jesus in the Temple, and the bitter invectives he used against their rulers, as a foretoken of further trouble to themselves. The Senate had at all events great reason to keep a watchful eye upon such a beginning on the part of Jesus. There had been many before him who had pretended by miracles to set themselves up as Messiahs, and whose ambitious motives had been discovered in the unfolding and failure of their plans. The Jews were at that time under the domination of the Romans, and if the people had suffered and encouraged any such turbulent beginning on the part of a proclaimed king who was to give freedom to Israel, they (the Romans) would doubtless have used their power to the greater restriction and slavery of the Jews. So they were obliged to consult as to how Jesus should be taken, and how danger in doing so should be avoided. When Jesus saw that the people did not shout "Hosanna to the son of David" as enthusiastically as did his disciples, but rather that they forsook him, and that the judges were about to seize him, he abstained from shewing himself in the Temple. He had not the courage to celebrate the Easter festival in the right manner, because in that case he, or his disciples in his name, would have been obliged to

appear at the Temple, to kill the Easter lamb, to sprinkle the blood upon the altar; and then he or they might have been taken, or their whereabouts might have been traced. Jesus, therefore, kept only a pascha, *μνημονευτικὸν*, or remembrance feast, and did so earlier than was usual. He ordered some swords to be procured to defend himself with in case of attack, but was uneasy, lest even one of his own disciples should divulge his place of retreat. He began to quiver and quake when he saw that his adventure might cost him his life. Judas betrayed his hiding-place, and pointed out his person. He was taken the night before the 14th Nisan, and after a short trial was crucified, before the slaughtering of the Easter lambs in the Temple had begun. He ended his life with the words, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani?*" "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"—a confession which can hardly be otherwise interpreted than that God had not helped him to carry out his intention and attain his object as he had hoped He would have done. It was then clearly not the intention or the object of Jesus to suffer and to die, but to build up a worldly kingdom, and to deliver the Israelites from bondage. It was in *this* that God had forsaken him, it was in *this* that his hopes had been frustrated.

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## SECTION IX.

Thus the existing history of Jesus enlightens us more and more upon the object of his conduct and teaching, which entirely correspond with the first idea entertained of him by his apostles, *i.e.*, that he was a worldly deliverer. It enlightens us also upon the fact that they had good reason to believe in him as such so long as he lived. It also shows that the master, and how much more his disciples, found themselves mistaken and deceived by the condemnation and the death, and that the new system of a suffering spiritual Saviour, which no one had ever known or thought of before, was invented *after* the death of Jesus, and invented only because the first hopes had failed. However, let us lay aside the authenticity of the old belief and carefully examine the new. Let us try to find out whether it can boast of a surer foundation.

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## CHAPTER III.

### *The New Belief.*

THE apostles themselves, by abandoning their former belief, show that they own themselves to have been mistaken, during the lifetime of Jesus, in his intentions and purpose. We may imagine that the altered opinions of such men, men who acknowledged themselves to have been grossly mistaken and disappointed in their hopes, were not likely to be better or surer than their previous opinions. But we will be as just as possible towards them. We will for a time forget their former errors, and will thoroughly weigh their new creed by itself, and according to their own views and grounds. Their system then consisted briefly in this: That Christ or the Messiah was bound to die in order to obtain forgiveness for mankind, and consequently to achieve his own glory; that upon the strength of this he arose living from death out of his tomb upon the third day as he had prophesied, and ascended into heaven, from whence he would soon return in the clouds of Heaven with great power and glory to judge the believers and the unbelievers, the good and the bad, and that then the kingdom of glory would commence.

Now everyone will readily acknowledge, as do the apostles, that Christianity depends entirely upon the truth of the story of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Everybody knows that the apostles established it as a fact, partly through the evidence of Pilate's watchmen at the grave, partly by their own statements and support, and partly through the prophecies of the Old Testament. We will follow and examine this threefold proof in three separate chapters, and will afterwards consider the promise of the return of Jesus in the clouds at so distinctly an appointed time, that it ought to have taken place long ago. We shall then be in a position to judge of the truth of the system. I shall begin by carefully putting aside all extraneous particulars which could give to Christianity either a good or a repulsive aspect, for nothing can be concluded with any certainty from them; they do not concern the essence of the subject, and, therefore, can give no proof. Only those persons who cherish their prejudices and think to take others in by them are apt to begin by daubing over their subject with a good coat of selected circumstances and secondary matters, and to fascinate the mind by them before they touch upon any part of the substance. And this they do in order that they may afterwards be permitted carefully to slip over the main point. I will step right up to the thing itself upon which all depends, and after clear and distinct argument, I will deliver my opinion of it. If in this manner the truth of the main point

or dogma can be convincingly produced, we shall the more confidently be able to criticise the outward and equivocal accessory circumstances.

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### SECTION X.

The first and most important question is. . . . Here follows the fragment concerning the story of the resurrection which I (Lessing) have incorporated with the librarian contributions. It runs from this tenth section to the thirty-second section, and with the thirty-third section the author continues his subject as follows.

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### SECTION XXXIII.

As, however, the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus are unable to bring forward any others, but are the only ones who pretend to have seen that which for other honest people remained invisible, and as in their reports they contradicted themselves in manifold ways, we must go further and see whether their assertion can be better proved by Scripture.

The worthy Stephen was the first who persisted so firmly in his persuasion of the resurrection of Jesus, that he allowed himself to be stoned to death for it; but as he could not support his asser-

tion by his experience and nowhere mentions ever having seen Jesus alive, or after he had risen from the dead, he has recourse to a proof he has found in the writings of the Old Testament, and in order to deliver himself of it in perfection, he becomes full of the Holy Ghost. His demonstration of the truth of the Christian religion is such a curious one, that were it not so circumstantially tedious, I would repeat the whole of it here. However, my readers will see for themselves that in giving its principal contents, I do not omit or twist awry anything essential.\*

He begins by relating a hundred things one does not care to hear, and which have nothing whatever to do with the question ; how Abraham was called out of Mesopotamia to Canaan, how his descendants were to inherit the land after four hundred years, how Isaac, Jacob and Joseph sprang from him, how Joseph was sold into Egypt and there became a great man, how he brought over his family, at what place Jacob and his sons were buried, how the descendants were kept in bondage, how Moses was born, how he was reared and educated by Pharaoh's daughter, how he killed an Egyptian and fled in consequence to Midian, how forty years afterwards he was chosen to release Israel, how he accomplished this by many miracles, how he received the commandments upon Mount Sinai, how the Israelites went back to the Egyptian idolatry

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\* *Acts of the Apostles*, chap. vii.

of the calf, Moloch and Remphan, how they received the tabernacle of witness and transported it to the land until the time of David. How David wanted to build a house, and how Solomon actually did so, although God does not dwell in houses. Now, does not the question occur to one: Why this long tale, which has nothing to do with Jesus or his resurrection? For, that Jesus was brought into the land of Canaan with the tabernacle of witness or inside of it is incomprehensible to any man. But patience! Now comes the proof. At any rate Stephen begins to abuse the High Council. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye resist at all times the Holy Ghost. As your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? Yea, they have slain those who announced the coming of this just one, of whom you have been the betrayers and murderers, who have received the commandments by the ministering of angels, and have not kept it."

Here, it appears, that his demonstration has come to an end, and that nothing is wanting but the "Q. E. D." But as the stiff-necked, treacherous murderers, godless members of the senate, become angry instead of believing him, Stephen is suddenly filled with the Holy Ghost, gazes into Heaven, sees the Glory of God, and tells them that he sees Jesus standing up there! It is a pity that among these seventy enlightened men there is not one who has eyes clear enough to see all this like-

wise. To the single man Stephen it is alone visible, and for this reason it is impossible for them to accept his visionary evidence. He is condemned, and stoned to death.

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#### SECTION XXXIV.

Another and a rather ingenious attempt at proving the Christian religion, and the resurrection of Jesus, is made by Paul in the synagogue at Antioch.\* He begins by signing with his hand that the audience should keep quiet, and then speaks:—

“Ye men of Israel, and ye that fear God, hearken unto me.”

Observe, my reader, that I shall let Paul speak, yet also reveal my own thoughts, which, if I set myself in the place of the to-be-converted Antiochians, would enter my mind at this speech of Paul.

“The God of this people hath chosen our fathers and hath exalted the people, when they were strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm He brought them out of it.”

This is certainly beginning in grand style!

“And for about forty years He suffered their manners in the wilderness, and when

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\* *Acts of the Apostles*, chap. xiii.

He had destroyed seven nations in the wilderness, He divided their land to them by lot."

What is the meaning of all this? What has it to do with the question?

"And after that He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And from this time they desired a king. And God gave them Saul, the son of Kis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years; and He removed him, and raised up David to be their king, to whom also He gave testimony, and said—I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall do all my will."

All this we knew from the Scriptures. What on earth is he going to draw from it?

"Of this man's seed hath God, according to His promise, raised unto Israel the Saviour Jesus."

But, my dear Paul, even if this should be proved, would it not have been better to leave out all the well-known stories of the Israelites, and rather make this promise valid, show its real sense, and explain that it could not have referred to any other man than Jesus?

"When John had first preached before his

coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel, but when John fulfilled his course, he said—‘Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But behold there cometh one after me, whose shoes I am not worthy to loose from his feet.’”

We must, I suppose, excuse the hurried jump from the prophecies of the prophets to John the Baptist. But if this is to prove the former proposition, the deduction from it is that John preached repentance, and pointed out Jesus as the Messiah; *not* that Jesus of Nazareth was promised by any of the prophets to be the saviour of Israel. If, then, John’s evidence alone is to show that this Jesus is the Messiah, we must decline to accept his testimony, because he has never proved it to us by the Old Testament, nor has he by any miracles or prophecies asserted himself to be a new prophet, in whom we ought to believe. This we do know of him, that he was a near relation of Jesus.

“Ye men, dear brethren, ye children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.’

The address sounds charming, and might elsewhere win over the mind, but as yet we have not arrived so far as to be convinced of the word of this salvation. We have not yet understood from it



that the old prophets spoke of Jesus of Nazareth as a saviour, nor that he must be a saviour *because John said so*. To promise oneself salvation without conviction, is to flatter oneself with an idle hope; and to abandon one's religion and take up a new one without any cause, is to play with religion.

“For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophet which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.”

If our rulers have not heard any further evidence of Jesus, than we Antiochians have, up to this day, they could not have recognised him as the Saviour. For in these very prophets, whom we read every Sabbath day, his name is nowhere mentioned, nor can we find in them any mark which could refer us to this person. But as he, notwithstanding, pretended to be a Messiah, we cannot be surprised that the High Council should condemn him to death. In all fairness, we must allow that the judges pronounced righteous judgment, that these seventy learned men could not find in Jesus any trace of the prophetic signs, and we must moreover grant

that these distinguished rulers of the people anticipated the tumult and confusion which would have arisen from his conduct, and prevented it.

“But God awakened him from the dead, and he appeared many days to them which went up to Jerusalem with him, which are his witnesses before all the world.”

Yes, but even had he risen from the dead, it would not follow that he was the Saviour, for we read in the Scriptures of others whom God had raised from the dead, but none of whom, on that account, He destined to be the Messiah of the people. And particularly this, that Jesus arose from death we have no good grounds for believing. The witnesses are his disciples and followers, people who are not in good repute with us. The senate at Jerusalem has distinctly warned us against them, saying, that these disciples came to the grave secretly, by night, and stole away the body of Jesus, and that now they were going about, proclaiming that he had arisen from the dead. We must not be blamed for placing more confidence in the members of the High Council than in such insignificant and suspicious witnesses.

“And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up

Jesus again, as it is also written in the second psalm: Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee."

You, then, Paul, would fain persuade us, not from your own personal experience as a witness, but from Scripture prophecies, that God raised Jesus from death. I pray you look at the second psalm, and tell us where it affirms that the words—"Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee," are equivalent to "In some distant day I will raise Jesus of Nazareth, Joseph's son, from the dead." Who can allow your explanation of Scripture? The text neither promises that any one shall in future rise from the dead, nor that any one arisen from the dead shall be the son of God, nor, on the other hand, that he who is the son of God must arise from the dead, or that Jesus of Nazareth is the son of God. We may turn and twist the text as we will, nothing can be got out of it that has the smallest connection with your proposition. We naturally suppose the words to be David's, whom God has accepted as His well-beloved and His son, and out of a shepherd has made a king. David informs us that the Lord spoke unto him (that is to say, through Samuel and Nathan), saying—"Thou (David) art my son (my well-beloved and my chosen), this day (now and henceforth) have I begotten thee (accepted thee as a son, and elected thee a king)." The whole of the psalm of Ethan is an expounding of these words. God is introduced,

speaking thus: "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn unto David my servant: I will establish thy seed everlastingly, and will build up thy seat for ever and ever." Then the prophet speaks: "At that time thou didst speak face to face with thy beloved, and saidst: I have awakened a hero who shall help, I have exalted a chosen one from the people. I have found David, my servant, I have anointed him with my holy oil, he will call me: Thou, my Father, my God, the rock of my salvation. I will make thee the first-born, the highest among the kings of the earth. I will for ever keep for him my beneficence, and my covenant shall be faithfully kept." Doubtless, then, it *must* be David to whom God speaks in the other psalm, where he is, as in this one, called the son of God, a chosen one, a first-born who shall call God his Father. In prophetic language, God has begotten him—that is to say, accepted him as a son, in the same manner in which (according to Moses) God had begotten Israel (who is also termed the son of God), and again in the same manner in which, according to the prophet, Israel has begotten the strangers who have been received into the church. But what does all this prove of Jesus of Nazareth?

"And as concerning that He raised him up from the dead in such wise that he shall henceforth not return to the grave, He said also: I will give you the sure mercies of David."

Others may be able to understand this method of demonstrating. For *us* it is too clever. According to it, the words, "I will give you the sure mercies of David," have the same meaning as the words, "I will awaken Jesus of Nazareth from death, in such wise that he henceforth shall not return to the grave." To *us* it appears that Esaias says, God will make an everlasting covenant with the Israelites, and give them the same good fortune which He promised to David, and which promise He kept, namely, that many nations should be in subjection to him. Esaias also explains himself to this effect in his very next verse: "Behold I have placed him (David) as a witness before the people, to be a prince and a ruler of the people."

"Therefore speaketh he also at another place (Psalm xvi. 10): Thou wilt not suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption; for David, after he had served his generation, fell asleep, and was laid unto his fathers and saw corruption; but he whom God raised again, saw no corruption."

If we take hold of the argument thus, it will sound more distinct.

The Psalm speaks of one who is not to see corruption; but David *did* see corruption. Therefore David could not have been he of whom the Psalm speaks. And, again, "He whom God awakened saw no corruption; but God awakened Jesus, there-

fore Jesus did not see corruption, therefore Jesus is he of whom the Psalm speaks." Now, Paul, with regard to your first inference, the question is, whether the words "seeing corruption" are to be taken literally, or whether they refer to a certain time, and to impending peril of death. I think that any one who is acquainted with the language of David will not find anything extraordinary in these words. It is well known that elsewhere, David, under the titles "Holy One" and "Pious One," means no other than himself, and one sees clearly that here, in this very Psalm, he praises the help of God, which has saved him from the peril of death menaced by Saul, has thrown his lot into the pleasantest places, and has given him a fair inheritance. At that time, it was then not without good reason that he hoped and prayed: "Thou wilt not leave my soul (me) in hell (the kingdom of the dead), nor suffer Thy pious one (David) to see corruption (the grave), but wilt sooner grant him a longer life, that he may benefit by Thy promised mercies." Elsewhere, David again speaks of a long life: "No brother can save the other from death, though he live long, and see not corruption." Therefore, "not to see corruption," does not mean "not to die at all," or "not to be dead for ever," but simply "not to die immediately," or "not to die soon," in short, it means "to live longer." For he says directly afterwards of those who shall not see corruption, "It will be seen that these wise ones will sometime (at last) die, like unto the fools."

And elsewhere: "Where is one who liveth and shall not see death, and shall save his soul from death?" Therefore, Paul, your first proposition that the Psalm speaks of one who shall not, or shall never see corruption, is incorrect; and your inference that the Psalm speaks not of David, is also false. What should induce us to depart from David himself, when, through the whole Psalm, he speaks of himself, and invariably uses the dedicatory words—I, my, with my soul, etc.; and how could David imagine or expect, when he speaks in this manner, that any one should think of Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was not born? In your other argument, Paul, you seem to have forgotten that which you wanted to prove, for your main point, which should have been proved, you take for granted in the antecedent without proof. Now the principal point to be proved was, according to your own words, that "God has awakened Jesus in such wise that he henceforth shall not return to the grave." In your other argument, you accept as the antecedent that God has awakened Jesus, and thus conclude that the Psalm says of Jesus that he did not see corruption. Surely it cannot be called *proving*—to accept that which is to be proved, without proof, as the antecedent. Nothing can come of this but an idle arguing in a circle. You say: "God has awakened Jesus." I ask: "How can you prove it?" You answer: "Because he is the same of whom David says that he shall not see corruption." I ask: "Why should David necessarily mean Jesus, and

how do we know that Jesus did not see corruption?" You answer: "Because he was awakened; for he whom God has awakened, has not seen corruption."

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### SECTION XXXV.

I do not pretend to assert that the thoughts of the Antiochians, whilst listening to the speech of Paul, were the same as my own, but as in these days we must often be Antiochians, and must listen to Paul's evidence of the Resurrection and the Christian religion, I candidly declare that however honestly I go to work, I cannot draw any other inference from it; and every one who has so far advanced in thinking as to be able to resolve a wild discourse into common-sense conclusions, and thus test it, will agree with me, that no other deduction can be wrung from the speech of Paul. Thus it is quite clear that the old Scripture evidence of the resurrection of Jesus never can stand proof before the judgment-seat of sound reason, and only contains a miserable and palpable *petitionem principii per circulum*.

Now these evidences of Stephen and Paul are the two most important and circumstantial in the New Testament, and that which is introduced in the second and third chapters of the Acts of the Apostles to enforce, through Scripture, the assump-



tion of the Resurrection contains nothing new, nothing to distinguish it from these two testimonies; therefore, it will be unnecessary to revert to it again. I shall, however, examine later on the Old Testament Scripture proofs brought forward by the *Evangelists*. By what I have stated above I think every one will see thus much: that if one cannot in good faith presuppose the main point from the New Testament to be proved, that is to say, the phrase: "This saying refers to Jesus of Nazareth," not one of the other Scripture sayings prove anything. They naturally refer to quite different persons, times, and occurrences. Among the *Evangelists* none introduce so many Scripture quotations as Matthew. Yet nothing is more manifest to such as have searched the pages of Scripture, than that they are either not to be found there at all, or not in those books from which they claim to be derived, or else the words are altered. To a rational mind they, one and all, contain nothing in themselves of the matter on account of which Matthew introduces them, and when read with the context, they cannot be drawn over to it otherwise than by a mere quibble in a forced allegory. This is particularly noteworthy where Jonas is quoted as a sign of the future resurrection of Jesus. How can any sensible person attach such a signification to any such fore-given signs? I read that there was a prophet Jonas who would not preach repentance to the heathen Ninevites and fled to the sea. Am I,

therefore, to infer that there was a Jesus who came from Nazareth, who *would* preach repentance to the Israelities, and therefore did *not* fly to the sea, but went willingly to Jerusalem to suffer and to die? I read further that Jonas was thrown by the sailors into the sea during a storm, and passed three days and three nights, alive, inside a whale. Am I, therefore, to conclude that Jesus of Nazareth passed, *not three days and three nights*, but *one day and two nights*, not in the sea but on the earth, not alive but truly dead in a grave in a rock? My skill in drawing conclusions does not extend so far.

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### SECTION XXXVI.

It has hitherto been shown that the new system adopted by the Apostles, of a spiritual suffering Saviour, who was to arise from the dead, and after his ascension to return from Heaven with great power and glory, is false in its first main principle, namely, the resurrection from the dead; 1st. Because the previously-cited evidence of the Roman guards, in Matthew, is highly incongruous, and is nowhere alluded to by any other Evangelists or Apostles. On the contrary, it is contradicted by many circumstances. So that the saying, which had become current among the Jews, namely, "that the disciples had come by night and stolen the body, and afterwards said he was risen," re-

mains not only quite possible, but highly probable. 2ndly. Because the disciples themselves, as witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, not only vary outrageously in the principal points of their assertion, but they also, in manifold ways, distinctly and grossly contradict one another. 3rdly. Their proof of the resurrection and of their whole system by the Old Testament writings, and by a number of things which have nothing to do with it, is made up of scolding and scoffing, distortion of Scripture sentences, false conclusions, and *Petitionibus Principii*. Now then, we come to the other principle of the new system of the Apostles, namely: that Jesus, after his ascension, will soon return from Heaven with power and great glory.

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## CHAPTER IV.

*The Doctrine of the Return of Jesus.*

## SECTION XXXVII.

THE better to understand this pretence and to discover its falsity, I will mention a few facts. First, it should be known that the Jews themselves had two different systems of their Messiah. Most of them, indeed, expected in such a person a worldly sovereign, who should release them from slavery, and make other nations submissive to them. In this system there was nothing but splendour and glory, no previous suffering, no return; the long-wished-for kingdom was to begin immediately upon the coming of the Messiah. However, there were some few others who said their Messiah would come twice, and each time after quite a different manner. The first time he would appear in misery, and would suffer and die. The second time he would come in the clouds of Heaven, and receive unlimited power. The Jew Trypho in Justin Martyr acknowledges this two-fold future of the Messiah. It is to be found in the Talmud and also in other Jewish writings. The

more modern Jews have even made a double Messiah out of this twofold coming; the one of the tribe of Joseph, who was to suffer and die; the other of the tribe of Judah, descended from David, who was to sit upon his throne and reign. The Jews, at the time of their bondage, had indeed tried so hard to strengthen the sweet hope they entertained of a deliverer, by so many Scripture passages, that, with the assistance of pharisaic allegories, they found their Messiah in countless sayings, and in almost all directions. For this reason, the passages, which in themselves contained no such allusion, ran so contrary to one another that in order to make them all rhyme together the Jews could help themselves in no other way than by imagining a twofold Messiah. It was, for example, believed that Zacharias referred to the Messiah when he said: "Hop for joy thou daughter of Zion, shout thou daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king will come to thee: the same is just, and a saviour." But then, again, he describes him as "poor," and "riding upon an ass." Thus there were many other passages in Scripture which, on account of some circumstances, appeared to them to speak of the hoped-for king and saviour, but which still intermingled his miserable condition, oppression, and persecution. In contradiction to this, Daniel, in his nocturnal visions, sees the following: "And there came one in the clouds of Heaven like the son of a man and came unto the aged one (one stricken in years), and to the same was given all

power and honour, and kingdom, that all nations and tongues should serve him." Here we have nothing but power and grandeur, as in several other passages which, according to Jewish ideas, relate to a promised saviour. In consequence, the few Jews, who combined the two accounts, could hardly fail to alight upon the notion that a Messiah would come twice, and each time after quite a different manner. One sees for oneself that the apostles of this system, however few there were, made use of it all the more because their first and most palatable system had, on account of its failure, been set aside; and one sees also that, after the death of Jesus as Messiah, they promised themselves a glorious future from him.

Further, it should be known that the Jews imagined the resurrection of the dead would take place after the second coming of the Messiah, when he would judge the living and the dead, and then the kingdom of Heaven or of the next world would begin, by which, however, they did not, like the Christians of the present day, mean a blissful or miserable eternity after the end of the world; but they meant the glorious reign of the Messiah upon this earth, which should indemnify them for their previous and then existing condition. The apostles were therefore obliged, in their new creed, to promise a different return of Christ from the clouds, by which all that they had vainly hoped for would be fulfilled, and by which his faithful followers, after the judgment had been passed, would come into

the inheritance of the kingdom. If the apostles had not promised such a glorious return of Christ, no man would have concerned himself about their Messiah, or have listened to their preachings. This glorious kingdom was the solace of the Israelites in all their tribulations; in the certain hope of it they bore every trial, and they willingly gave up all they had, because they expected to receive it back an hundredfold.

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#### SECTION XXXVIII.

Now if the apostles had at that time said that it would be about seventeen, eighteen, or several hundred years before Christ would return in the clouds of Heaven and begin his kingdom, people would simply have laughed at them, and would naturally have thought that by their placing the fulfilment of the promise far beyond the lives of so many men and generations, they were only seeking to hide their own and their master's disgrace. No Jew separated the second coming of the Messiah so far from the first; and as the first was bound to have taken place on account of the second, there was no good reason why the kingdom of glory should not begin soon. Who would have parted with his means of subsistence or his fortune for the sake of it, and made himself poor before the time and in vain? Whence could the apostles have drawn the means

which they were to divide so plentifully among their new converts? It was then imperative that the apostles should promise the second coming of Christ and the kingdom of glory in good time, or at all events during the lifetime of the then existing Jews. The sayings also which they impute to Christ point to his return *before that generation of Jews had passed away*. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, when Jesus is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem and of his second coming, the disciples ask him, "Tell us when shall these things be? What will be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" By the end of the world they meant, according to Jewish language, the end of the time previous to the kingdom of the Messiah, or the abolishment of the present kingdom, which was supposed to be directly connected with the new kingdom. So the apostles and evangelists impute to their master an answer which commences by warning them against any false Christs or Messiahs who might pretend to be himself before the end came. He says: "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars will fall from Heaven, and the powers of the heavens will quake;" that is, in the prophetic language of the Hebrews, that the existing world or the existing constitution of the Jewish republic should come to an end. Jesus continues: "And then will appear the sign of the son of man in heaven, and then all the generations of earth shall



strike their breasts and shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory," etc. "Verily I say unto you, *this generation shall not pass away until all this has happened.* But of the day and of the hour no man knows. Therefore watch, for ye know not at what hour your Lord cometh. Therefore be prepared, for the son of man will come at an hour when you look not for him. But when the son of man cometh in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then will he sit upon the seat of his glory, and all nations will be assembled before him, and he will separate them one from the other, like as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."

According to these speeches, the visible coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven to the kingdom of his glory is clearly and exactly appointed to take place, soon after the imminent tribulations of the Jews, and before "this generation," or those Jews who were alive at the time of Jesus, had passed away or died. And although no one was to know of the day or the hour, yet those who were then alive, particularly the disciples, were to watch and be prepared, because he should come at an hour when they were not expecting him. That this was the true meaning of the words of the evangelist is clearly shown by another passage from the same; for after Jesus had said he must go up to Jerusalem and would there be killed and would rise again, he adds: "For it surely will come to pass that the son of man shall come in the glory of his Father,

with his angels, and then will he reward each one according to his works. Verily I say unto you, *there be some standing among you who shall not taste of death until they have seen the son of man come into his kingdom.*"

No speech in this world can more distinctly fix the time of the visible glorious return of Christ to a certain period and within the bounds of a not very distant one. Some of those persons who then stood upon the same spot around Jesus were not to die before his return, but were to see him come into his kingdom.

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#### SECTION XXXIX.

But as Christ unfortunately did not come in the clouds of heaven within the appointed time, nor even after many centuries had passed away, people try now-a-days to remedy the failure of the promise by giving to its words an artificial but very meagre signification. The words "*this generation shall not pass away*" must needs be tortured into meaning that the *Jewish people* or *Jewish nation* shall not pass away. By such an interpretation they think that the promise may still stand good. Thus they say the Jewish nation has not passed away, therefore the appointed time for the second coming of Christ has not elapsed. But the Jews are fostered and cherished all too well in Christendom for that gentle nation to pass away, and it seems as though one had calculated upon the subterfuge being as neces-

sary many centuries hence, as it is now. But neither now nor in future can it ever warrant a safe refuge. Matthew's words, or, if you prefer it, Christ's own words quoted in the foregoing passage, can never be reconciled to the mind, because the people who in one particular spot stood around Jesus before his suffering, could certainly not signify the whole Jewish nation after many successive centuries. Neither is it possible that any of them have not yet tasted of death! To assert this one would be obliged, as a last resource, to invent an everlasting Jew, who had existed from the time of Jesus. I will now proceed to show from the quoted words themselves, that the fundamental word *γενεὰ* does not at all signify a nation or a people. The people or the nation of the Jews, or any other people or nation, is expressed by the words *λαὸς* and *ἔθνος*, but the word *γενεὰ* in the New Testament and everywhere else, means *generation*, or, people who are living together in the world at the same time, and who by their exit from this stage, make room for other generations.

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#### SECTION XL.

It will be remembered that in the beginning of the gospel of Matthew, are counted, from Abraham to David *γενεαὶ τέσσαρες καὶ δεκά*, fourteen generations, and again from David to the Babylonian captivity, *γενεαὶ τέσσαρες καὶ δεκά*, fourteen generations; lastly

from the Babylonian captivity to Christ *γενεαὶ τέσσαρες καὶ δέκα*, fourteen generations, all of which are also named by Matthew in the table of generations. Now any other generations besides those existing were called *παρωχημένοι, ἑτεραί, ἀρχαῖαι γενεαὶ*, old generations, those which had passed away. The generation living at the time of Jesus was *αὕτη γενεὰ*, the present generation, or *this generation*, which would also in its own time, pass away *παρέλθῃ*. Jesus often describes the then existing one as a wicked, adulterous, unbelieving generation, because it had calumniated both him and John, and had required a sign from heaven. He said that the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba would fare better at the day of judgment than this generation, which had heard a far greater prophet than Jonas, and a wiser than Solomon, and yet had despised him. Jesus particularly includes his own disciples in this generation, and reproves them as a faithless and perverse generation, when they could not drive out a certain devil; and he asks, "How long shall I be with you?" In every other part of the New Testament, the word *γενεὰ* has the same signification, as every one can see who pleases to wander through the fans of concordance. The seventy interpreters, the Apocrypha, Philo, Josephus, and also the profane Scribes attribute exactly the same meaning to it. With the Hebrews, particularly, it is nothing else than the Hebrew *דור Dor*. Thus Solomon says, "*Dor holech vedor ba,*" *γενεὰ πορεύεται καὶ γενεὰ ἔρχεται*, "one generation passes away, the other

comes." Moses says that God allowed the Israelites to wander to and fro in the wilderness forty years long, until the whole generation which had done evil in the sight of the Lord had passed away, *ἕως ἔξαναλώθη πᾶσα ἡ γενεὰ, οἱ ποιοῦντες τὰ πονερά.* Also in another passage ; *ἕως οὗ διέπεσε πᾶσα γενεὰ ἀνδρῶν πολεμιστῶν.* And again, when referring to those who had lived at the time of Joshua, it is written, that the whole generation had been gathered to its fathers, *καὶ πᾶσα ἡ γενεὰ ἐκείνη προσετέθησαν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας αὐτῶν.*

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### SECTION XLI.

It is therefore irrefutable that in Jesus' speech in Matthew "this generation" *αὕτη γενεά* means nothing more than "the Jews who lived at the time of Jesus." *These* were not to pass away or die until he should "return in the clouds with great power and glory." Now as it is undeniable that nothing of the kind happened, the fact that the Jewish nation has not passed away but still exists is a sorry cloaking to the falsity of the prediction. "This generation," which could and would pass away, cannot possibly be the entire nation with all its generations at different times. Neither Jesus nor the Jews ever thought that their people or nation would pass away, but that one generation after the other would pass away was acknowledged by Moses, Joshua, Solomon, and was known to every one,

from the common experience of mortality. It might then be said of a generation that it should pass away, and consequently the time of a future occurrence might, through the limit of the life of a present generation, be appointed; but no Jew said of the whole Jewish nation that it would pass away; therefore the time of a future occurrence could not be appointed upon the passing away of the whole nation. Indeed, a fulfilment of a particular promised thing cannot, after its hoped-for reality, be decided through an invulnerable thing, a thing which perpetually continues from century to century, unto eternity. Were I standing beside the Danube, the Elbe, or the Rhine, and, knowing all the currents of the stream, were I to say to any one: This river shall not pass away until I come again; would it not be equivalent to saying, "I shall never come again"? To assert that "the whole Jewish nation, with all its continual generations, shall not pass away until Christ comes again," would be a nice way of appointing his return in the clouds! To any Jew one might as well say: "He will not come again until the river Jordan has passed away, until eternity is at an end." Therefore it is impossible that "this generation" in Christ's prediction should have meant anything but "the Jews who were then living."

Further, what could more clearly have pointed out the sense and object of the words than the following speech of Jesus in another passage: "there be some among you standing here by me who shall

not taste of death until they see the son of man come into his kingdom?" The meaning here is identically the same as that in the foregoing mode of expression: "this generation shall not pass away;" for those who stood there, by Jesus, were certain persons of *that* generation, or, of the then existing Jews, and *they* were not to taste of death until they saw him come again in the clouds; and, in so far as the then existing generation of Jews is (in the latter expression) limited by the lives of persons named, the thing is even more particularly and exactly decided, so that any one who could still raise objections to a meaning so circumstantially determined, must have lost all sense of shame. It is certain that in the Old Testament the first coming of the Messiah is not anything like so exactly fixed to a particular time, as is the second coming in the New Testament; and a Jew can use, as a pretext for the non-appearance of his hoped-for Messiah, much fairer and more reasonable interpretations and arguments than a Christian can for the non-return of Christ.

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## SECTION XLII.

In going through the New Testament, one sees that the disciples had this conception of the promised return of Jesus, and that they imparted to the newly converted that it would take place very soon, indeed, during their own lifetime. The

disciples are represented by Luke as enquiring of Jesus after his resurrection: "Lord, wilt thou not at this time restore the kingdom to these Israelites?" Again, in their epistles, they pretend that the return of Christ is near at hand, and exhort the faithful to watch and be ready, as it would come to pass in their own time, aye, and might come at any hour or moment, that they might be found in a condition to take part in the kingdom of glory. James likewise encourages them thus: "Be then patient, dear brethren, until the return of the Lord. . . . Be ye also patient, for the return of the Lord is near at hand. . . . Behold, the judge standeth at the door." Paul writes to the Thessalonians, that although some among them had gone to sleep before the return of the Lord, they would be carried to meet him when he appeared in the clouds, at the same time as those who then remained alive. He says: "I would not have you ignorant, dear brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a war-shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the sackbut of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall



be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Therefore comfort ye one another with these words. But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night; for when they shall say Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief."

In the same manner Paul says to the Corinthians: "Behold, I tell you a secret. We shall indeed not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump; for the trump will sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

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### SECTION XLIII.

It is then not to be wondered at, that the early Christians after such plain words from Jesus himself, and from his apostles, should daily have looked for this return of Christ in the clouds, or that they should have been in constant expectation of the glorious kingdom, believing that at least some among them would be alive at the time of its commencement. Can we blame them for thinking the

time too long, when one after another fell asleep without living to witness it? Is it surprising that scoffers should have come at last and said, "Where is the promise of his return? for from the days when our fathers fell asleep, all remains as it was at the beginning of the creation?" It must have come to the ears of Paul, that the Thessalonians, from his own first epistle and the speeches of others, considered the return of Christ to be so very near, that it would be impossible to redeem the promise. So in his next epistle he speaks in mysterious words of a "falling off" of a "man of sin," of the "son of perdition," of the "godless one who must come first," who was even then at work, but was detained, and when at last he revealed himself, the Lord would put him to death with the breath of his mouth, and would destroy him by the brightness of his coming. He therefore prays the Thessalonians: "Be not soon shaken in mind, nor be troubled neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." But this dark dilatory consolation could not be depended upon for any length of time, for even should the "son of perdition" be intended to represent the Emperor Caligula, or any of his successors (as many think) he must soon have been revealed. Why was he not destroyed by the "brightness of Christ's coming"? If, on the other hand, by "the son of perdition" was meant one who belonged to a later century, the prediction of Jesus himself that "some of those standing by him

should not taste of death until they had seen him come into his kingdom" would not have been fulfilled. And the promise which Paul himself made to the Thessalonians and Corinthians, viz.: that some among them would not be fallen asleep when Christ with the trump of God should come in the clouds to his kingdom, would not have been fulfilled. The truth is that compare Paul's words with whichever account you will, they cannot accord with, or be applied to, a single one of them, and almost the only conclusion you can come to is that to draw himself out of the difficulty with honour, he carefully concealed himself in the dark, so that the delay of the return of Christ could be placed farther and farther away at pleasure.

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#### SECTION XLIV.

Our good Paul, however, does not thoroughly understand the art of giving evasive answers. Peter is a better hand at it. He says: "Know that in the last days scoffers will come and will say: Where is the promise of his return? for from the days the fathers fell asleep, everything remains as it was from the beginning of creation." After mentioning some things which have nothing to do with the subject, he continues: "I would not have you ignorant, beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one

day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward. . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," etc. Even at that time there seem to have been scoffers, for Peter warns his faithful followers against them, and tells them not to be persuaded by them. If then after seventeen hundred years there should come scoffers who ask: Where is now his return? Peter has already answered in advance, that they have only waited a little over one-and-a-half of the Lord's days more than was due, and that the delay was owing to his "long-suffering." And if the return of Christ should not occur for another couple of thousand years, Peter has again met the scoffer with the answer that his calculation is wrong, the two thousand years were only a couple of days which Christ has spent for their benefit in heaven before he let himself down. But such like answers will, I fear, give little satisfaction to sensible honest men, and even less to the scoffers. The thing which cannot be supported by better props than these must be in a very bad way.

What business here has the verse from Psalm cx.? According to the evangelists, Christ so distinctly fixed his second coming that some of those who then stood round him were to be living when he returned in the clouds. It would then be absurd to push his return so far ahead, because a thousand years with God are as one day; for the return, you see, was not fixed according to God's

days, but according to man's days, namely, the days of those men who stood around. In any case it is absurd to measure the time by God's days, even were they a hundred thousand human years long; but if this was to be comprehended according to human understanding, why then did Peter make a human day into a thousand years?

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#### SECTION XLV.

Here, then, there was no alternative but that of burying the exact appointment of the time in oblivion, as though it had never been fixed at all, and instead of it to make a terminus so long that it can be extended to eternity; for three hundred and sixty-five thousand human years would then have to elapse before one of God's years could come to an end, and yet the delay could not be called a delay, because either the "long-suffering" or some other peculiarity of God would be sufficient reason why one ought not to enquire so very particularly into His foresight, His prophecies, and His truth. The apostles, meanwhile, gained this much by the early foolish Christianity: that once the faithful had fallen asleep and the real terminus had been well passed over, the succeeding Christians and fathers of the Church could by idle hopes and promises go on keeping up the delusion. We read that John, one of the apostles and evangelists, who at the time of Jesus was very young, and who lived the longest, pretends to be he who might

perhaps live to see the return of Christ. He introduces Peter as saying to Jesus: "Lord, and what shall this man do?" and Jesus as answering: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Jesus, however, as not having said that he should not die but only "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Accordingly, John concludes his Revelation thus: "He which testifieth these things saith, 'Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.'"\*

After the apostles, the first fathers of the Church still continued to hope that Christ would appear and begin his kingdom upon earth in their own times; and thus it went on from century to century, until at last the unaccomplished time of Christ's second coming became forgotten, and our present theologians pass nimbly over the matter because it is not beneficial to their purposes; they also try to cultivate a very different object in the return of Christ in the clouds of Heaven, to that which he himself and his apostles taught.

Now-a-days, when people read more what is in the catechism and the *Compendiis Theologiæ* than what is in the Bible; how many are there who ever remember that the openly appointed time for the second coming of Jesus has long passed by, and that consequently one of the mainstays of Christianity is shown to be utterly worthless? The two propositions

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\* The identity of the author of the Apocalypse with the author of the Fourth Gospel has been abundantly disproved.—EDITOR.

and articles of faith: "Christ has arisen from the dead," and "Christ will return to his kingdom in the clouds of heaven," are indisputably the pillars upon which Christianity and the new creed of the apostles are built. If Christ has not arisen, then, as Paul himself declares, our belief is vain; and if Christ neither has nor does come again to reward the faithful in his kingdom, then is our belief as useless as it is false. My readers will see that in the contemplation hitherto made I have avoided touching unessential contingencies, but have forced my way right up to the substance and main point of Christianity. I have compared the old system of the apostles, viz., *worldly deliverance of the Israelites*, with the purposes of Jesus in his teaching and behaviour in the account given by the evangelists, and have found well-grounded reasons for believing that they agree; and that it was only on account of failure and disappointed hope that the apostles abandoned their first creed. Also that their altered new religious structure of *a spiritual saviour of the human race* was erected upon two pretended facts given as articles of faith, which, by the manifold contradictions of witnesses and the course of events themselves, are shown to be strikingly fictitious.

I should be glad if every sensible upright reader would search every book that has been written on the truth of the Christian religion, and judge for himself whether anything therein to be found can remove in the smallest degree the objections above stated, or can bring forward anything by which

they must fall to the ground. I myself read the most and the best of these books before I had begun to doubt; since then reflection and earnest thought have given rise to doubts, and I say that not one of the writers of these works has been able to remove one of these doubts—a great many of which they have not even touched upon. Indeed, these supposed champions of Christianity skip all too softly over its real foundation. They exhaust the power of their minds and language upon unessential things, which, although they impart to the religion a brilliancy very fascinating to people who are incapable of sifting fundamentally, yet are either in themselves improbable, or do not afford any sure proof of the truth of Christianity.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### *On Miracles and Prophecies.*

#### SECTION XLVI.

THE essential parts of Christianity are the articles of faith by the denial or ignorance of which we cease to be Christians. The principal of these are: the spiritual deliverance through the suffering and death of Christ; Resurrection from death in confirmation of the *sufficient* suffering of Christ; and, the return of Christ for reward and punishment, as the fruit and consequence of the deliverance. He who grapples with or disproves these first principles attacks the substance (or essence) of the object. By unessential things in reference to religion I mean first of all, the miracles, to which nevertheless such particular importance is attached by the Christian religion. No one can affirm that miracles of themselves establish a single article of faith. If we granted that articles of faith carried with them conviction and inherent credibility, how should we dare to require miracles in order to believe them? If we granted that the resurrection had been proved to be true by the most undoubted and unanimous

witnesses, as in all fairness it ought to be, we could surely believe it without any assistant miracle. If we granted that Christ really did return in the clouds of Heaven, as according to promise he ought to have done, we should certainly want no miracles to prove it.

On the other hand, if we grant that the truth of the above-mentioned events is based partly upon suspicious and contradictory evidence, and partly upon occurrences which manifestly never took place, or that the doctrines contain contradiction, no miracles can mend the matter, first, because miracles are unnatural events, as improbable as they are incredible, requiring as much examination as that which they are supposed to prove; secondly, because they contain nothing in themselves from which the inference could be drawn:—this and that has happened: *ergo*, this or that doctrine is true: *ergo*, this or that is no contradiction.

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## SECTION XLVII.

I have said that to discover whether miracles are true requires as much investigation as the thing they are supposed to prove. In reading the history of Moses and the succeeding times, we have already seen that it cost the writer neither intellect, skill, nor trouble to concoct miracles, and that the reader requires still less intellect to believe

them. The historian kills all Pharaoh's cattle three times running. Each time not a single beast is left alive; but in his fertile imagination there are always fresh ones ready to be again demolished. Where they all came from is quite immaterial to him. He makes the Israelites take all their cattle away with them, not leaving a single hoof behind, and yet when he wants to perform miracles, they are every moment suffering from hunger, so that meat must needs rain from heaven. In three hours and on a very dark night he brings thirty hundred thousand men with women and babes, aged and sick, lame and blind, tents and furniture, waggons and harness, three hundred thousand oxen, six hundred thousand sheep, safe and sound over the bottom of a sea which at the very least must have been a German mile in breadth; a bottom which on account of weed and mud in one place, sand and coral branches in another, rocks here and islets there, is impassable. He does not trouble himself to reflect whether the thing is possible. Enough! he imagines and writes them safe across in a single night-watch! To light his conquering Israel he bids the sun to stand still for twenty-four hours. Into what sort of condition the outer world would have been thrown in consequence, is immaterial. He has but to say the word, and the sun stops with the whole machinery of the world. He blows and shouts down the strongest walls, although he cannot shout away the aggravating iron chariots any more than he can bid them stop. He changes one

thing into another according to his pleasure ; rods into serpents, water into blood, dust into lice. He bids water to tower up without support, contrary to its nature, and with a blow of his rod draws water from a dry rock. He creates a world in which men fly through the air, and in which an ass, an angel and a man hold a conversation together.

In short, all nature is at his command, he shapes and orders it as he pleases ; but, as in a dream, full of fabulous tales, a Utopia, without order, rules, harmony, truth, or sense. The most childish writer could make such miracles as these, and in order to believe them one would have to abandon all the maxims of a healthy mind. The historians, indeed, betray themselves by owning that the miracles, at the time they occurred, never found any faith among the Israelites.

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### SECTION XLVIII.

The miracles of the New Testament are not so outrageous and disgusting throughout, as those of the Old. They consist chiefly in the healing of the lame, blind, deaf, sick, and of those possessed of devils ; but yet the writers entangle themselves hopelessly here and there in glaring contradiction, and nowhere do they accord to us a report of circumstances and reliable investigation, from which

one could judge whether the thing supposed to have happened was a *bonâ fide* miracle. They write down their assertions in the most vapid and dull manner, and then set a seal of faith upon them: "Whoso believeth shall be saved, whoso believeth not shall be damned." Jesus himself could not perform miracles where the people had not faith beforehand, and when sensible men, the learned and rulers of those times, demanded of him a miracle which could be submitted to examination, he, instead of granting the request, began to upbraid them; so that no man of this stamp could believe in him. It was not until thirty to sixty years after the death of Jesus, that people began to write an account of the performance of these miracles, in a language which the Jews in Palestine did not understand. And this was at a time when the Jewish nation was in a state of the greatest inquietude and confusion, and when very few of those who had known Jesus were still alive. Nothing then was easier for them than to invent as many miracles as they pleased, without fear of their writings being readily understood or refuted. It had been impressed upon all converts from the beginning that it was both advantageous and soul-saving to believe, and to put the mind captive under the obedience of faith; and consequently there was as much credulity among them as there was "*pia fraus*" or "deception from good motives" among their teachers; and both of these, as is well known, prevailed in the highest degree in the

early Christian Church. Other religions, indeed, are quite as full of miracles; the heathen boasts of many, so does the Turk; no religion is without them, and this it is which also makes the Christian miracles so doubtful, and provokes us to ask: "Did the events really happen? Were the attendant circumstances such as are stated? Did they come to pass naturally, or by craft, or by chance?" Those who are conversant with the matter and the history will see very well that I write the truth. But as yet I do not require of those who have no knowledge of them, that they accord to me justice and right. Meanwhile, I have been obliged to lay before them the doubts which are apt to occur to reasonable thinking men on reading the miracles of the New Testament, so that if they do not know how to answer these doubts, they may at least confess that miracles are not such certain facts that one can prove and establish other incredible narratives or doctrines by them, and that consequently those who would build Christianity upon miracles give it nothing firm, deep or substantial for a foundation.

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#### SECTION XLIX.

It is always a sign that a doctrine or history possesses no depth of authenticity when one is obliged to resort to miracles in order to prove its

truth. . . Miracles do not possess in or by themselves any principle containing a single article of faith or conclusive fact. It follows not because a prophet has performed miracles that therefore he has spoken the truth, because false prophets and magicians also performed signs and wonders, and false Christs performed miracles by which even the elect might be deceived. It follows not because Jesus restored sight to a blind man and healed a lame one, *ergo* God is threefold in person, *ergo* Jesus is a real God and man. It follows not because Jesus awakened Lazarus from death that therefore he also must have arisen from death. Why need we be drawn away from the main point and referred to extraneous irrelevant things, when we have found marks enough upon the thing itself by which what is true can be distinguished from what is false, and when these same marks cannot be obliterated by any amount of accessory miracles ?

The unerring signs of truth and falsehood are clear, distinct consistency and contradiction. This is also the case with revelation, in so far as that it must, in common with other truths, be free from contradiction. And just as little as miracles can prove that twice two are five, or that a triangle has four angles, can a contradiction lying in the history and dogmas of Christianity be removed by any number of miracles. However many blind and lame people Jesus and the apostles may have healed, and however many legions of devils they may have driven out, they cannot thereby heal the

contradictions in their system of the Messiah, and in their unsatisfactory evidences of his resurrection and return. Contradiction is a devil and father of lies, who refuses to be driven out either by fasting and prayer, or by miracles. Let what will have been done by these miracle-performing people, they cannot thereby have made things happen which did not happen, nor have made Christ return in the clouds of Heaven before those who stood by him had tasted of death.

No miracle can prove that the saying, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," was spoken of Jesus; or that any prophet of the Bible ever said, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

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#### SECTION L.

What I have said of miracles, viz., that they are of themselves uncertain and do not contain the evidence of truth, I must also say of the prophecies, upon the infallibility of which the defenders of Christianity likewise insist. If a prophecy is to be called infallible, I fairly demand that it should state beforehand legibly, clearly, and distinctly that which no man could previously have known, and that the same should thereafter take place at the time appointed, but that it should not take place because it has been predicted. If, however, such a prophecy can only be verified through



allegorical interpretation of words and things ; if it be only composed of dark and dubious words, and the expressions it contains are commonplace, vague, and uncertain ; if the matter was thought probable, or was foreseen by human cunning ; if it occurs because it was predicted ; if the words used refer to some other matter and are only applied to the prophecy by a quibble ; if it is only written down after the event has occurred ; if a prophetic book or passage is given out to be older than it is ; or lastly, if the thing predicted does not take place at all, then the prophecy is either doubtful or false. If, then we judge by these rules and commence an investigation of those Old Testament prophecies which have been applied to the New Testament, we shall find them to be worthless and false. Those which are most clearly expressed never came to pass, for example : that "the Messiah should sit upon the seat of David on Mount Zion and reign from one sea to another, even unto the end of the world," and all besides that was prophesied of the deliverer of Israel. Other prophecies are merely adapted through quibbles, and in reality refer to quite other things. I have recently given two examples of them. Later on I will show that not a single sentence from the Old Testament applied by Matthew and others to the history of Jesus was written in the sense ascribed to it. Other passages again contain matters which are applied by the apostles allegorically to Christ, such as the sign of the prophet Jonas who was three days and three

nights inside of a whale; and also the saying, "I will be his father, he shall be my son." Before such passages as these our present theologians have no alternative but to take refuge in a circle, by which I mean that they endeavour to prove the truth of the New Testament and its doctrine through the prophecies of the Old, and the things said or meant in the Old Testament through the New, that is to say, through St. Matthew, St. Paul, etc., etc. With a little extra ingenuity, many passages could thus be applied to Christ, in order that "what was written might be fulfilled," such as "Behold thy king cometh—riding upon an ass and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."\* In short, I may affirm that one cannot refer to a single quoted prophecy that is not false; or if you would have me speak more mildly, I will only say that they are all ambiguous and doubtful, and are not to be accepted from writers who trifle with things and words.

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#### SECTION LI.

Thus it is easy to perceive how the conclusion halts on all sides:—

1st. Because the argument, drawn from predictions which are no clearer or more distinct than those above referred to in the New Testament, runs in a circle and must commit a "*petitionem principii*."

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\* An example of fulfilment, *because* it was predicted.

The representation of Christianity by Paul is—

“Jesus of Nazareth is the son of God.”

How so?

“Because it is written: I will be his father, and he shall be my son: thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.”

But it appears to me that the former refers to Solomon and the latter to David.

“And even were it so, a far higher personage must be prefigured under David and Solomon.”

Good. But how am I to know that? Do the writers of the Old Testament prove such to be the case?

“Not exactly. But the holy Apostle Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, shows us the master-mind and the counter-image which is prefigured.”

Then Paul’s doctrine is true, because he says so.

And thus it is with a hundred other passages, principally with those from which one can draw no conclusion in favour of Christianity unless one first grants that they possess an allegorical meaning pointing to Christianity.

2nd. Even supposing the sense of the Old Testament passages by themselves to be rightly hit upon, it still does not at all follow that Jesus of Nazareth was meant by them. Granted that the Messiah was to come out of Bethlehem, are then all those who spring from Bethlehem Messiahs? Granted the Messiah was to come out of Egypt, are then all those who come out of Egypt Messiahs?

Granted that he lived at Nazareth, can any one who sojourns at Nazareth call himself the Messiah? We shall be answered "That is all very well, but when so many, when all the signs are fulfilled in one person, that person must be meant, and no other." But here we relapse again into the same old circle. The writers of the New Testament noted the particularities attending the life of Jesus (of which I have given some account before), and then would fain make a Messiah out of him. To accomplish this they pretended that these particularities had been prophesied and fulfilled in him. And as prophecies that *really* corresponded could not be found, they, through quibbles and allegories, twisted and turned this and that passage in the Old Testament to suit their purpose. If, then, we cannot discover that any of those passages were written in the sense attributed to them, or that any refer to Jesus in particular, it follows that we are to believe in the meaning given to the prophecies by the writers of the New Testament simply because they say so.

3rd. It is a false conclusion that "This or that has been predicted of the Jewish Messiah; *ergo*, this or that was fulfilled in Jesus." I call that surreptitiously sneaking past two propositions at once, and just those actually in question. I should conclude thus: "This or that has happened and was predicted; *ergo*, the prediction of that which happened is fulfilled." For it must always be previously shown that this or that has happened with

regard to a certain person, and that such deed or event was previously prophesied of that person. *Then* only can we accept the truth of the prophecy, and grant that it has been fulfilled in the person. Even Moses teaches us to conclude thus. But those who begin by taking for granted that prophecies must be true and must be fulfilled, those who do not first show events to have really occurred, but prove by prophecies *supposed* to be true, slyly steal past both the points in question. Let us, for instance, suppose it to have been prophesied of the Messiah that he should perform miracles, restore sight to the blind, make the lame walk, and that he should arise from death. Does it follow that the prophecy was a true one ?

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## SECTION LII.

Every attentive reader will readily perceive that I look upon the many miracles handed down by the apostles, their assumed honesty and piety in relating them, their doctrines and lives, the martyr deaths which they suffered, and upon which the evidence of Christianity is chiefly grounded, as a number of unessential secondary things, which do not by any means make out the truth of the main point. Even if I allowed it to remain undecided whether or not each of these accounts taken singly was undeniable, and capable of being proved, and

doubtful how things came about, it is still clearly evident that none of them touch the substance of the matter, or can solve the doubts and difficulties. Many other religions have the same equivocal principles of foundation, but the proofs these pretend to contain of the truth of a religion are not conclusive, and where there are visible marks of falsity, they are impotent.

A thousand asserted miracles cannot clear up and set straight one single evident contradiction in the accounts of the Resurrection now before my eyes. All the asserted piety and holiness of the apostles cannot convince me that Jesus visibly returned with great power and glory, and began his glorious kingdom upon earth before some of those who stood round him had tasted of death. All the martyrs with the unheard-of torments they endured will not convince me that the passage, "Out of Egypt have I called my son" refers to Jesus; or that the sentence, "He shall be called a Nazarene," stands in the existing writings of the Old Testament.

The fact that a number of people, however great, have adopted one and the same religion, does not show me that they were right in having done so, and that they made their choice with due consideration and with sense. As, then, no light can be thrown upon the main point for me by any of these things, and as they cannot clear away any of my doubts, I do not see why I should allow myself to be drawn out of my straight course by looking

into them more closely, nor do I think that my readers will wish me to do so, but will be satisfied if I touch only upon such as I may encounter on the way, and which might perhaps hinder my progress. I will now then proceed to enquire into the real object of the apostles in inventing and building up their new doctrine, and how by degrees they succeeded, and shall, by comparing fundamentally all the circumstances, endeavour as far as possible to discover it.

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## CHAPTER V.

### *The Worldly Ambition of the Apostles.*

#### SECTION LIII.

THE apostles were chiefly men of the lower class and of small means, who gained their livelihood by fishing and other trades. They probably knew little or nothing beyond their occupation, although it is possible that they may have been men who combined study with business, and only resorted to the latter in case of need, as was often the case with Jews such as Paul, who, though so learned, maintained himself occasionally by making tents. Now when they resolved upon following Jesus, they entirely forsook their trade and all connected with it, hearkened to his teaching, and went about everywhere with him, or from time to time were sent by him to the towns of Israel to announce that the kingdom of Heaven was near at hand, and twelve of them were accordingly chosen to become these messengers of joy. Here we do not require deductions or inferences as to what may have



induced the apostles to forsake all and follow Jesus, because the evangelists distinctly inform us that they entertained hopes that the Messiah would establish a kingdom, or become king of Israel, and seat himself upon the throne of David. At the same time Jesus himself gave them his promise that they also should sit upon twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Indeed, they already sat upon them so firmly in imagination, that they began to dispute, rather prematurely, among themselves as to who should have the first place and the greatest power next to Jesus. One of them wanted to sit at his right, the other at his left. Meantime, they did not forget to remind Jesus of their claims in having forsaken all and followed him, nor to ask him what they should receive for having done so. And when Jesus comforts them by saying that those who have left fields, houses, etc., etc., for his sake shall receive back an hundredfold, they are content, and only wait anxiously for the time and the hour when his kingdom should really begin. But this weary waiting only lasted until the execution of Jesus, which at once dashed all their idle hopes to the ground; and then they complain, "We hoped that he would have delivered Israel!" It is clear, by their own account, and therefore requires no further proof, that the apostles and all the disciples were induced by ambitious motives, by hopes of future wealth and power, lands and worldly goods, to follow Jesus as their Messiah and king. It is also

clear that they never abandoned these hopes and aims as long as Jesus was alive, and even gave vent to them after his death. So far, all this must be acknowledged by every one. No one can, without the greatest impudence, deny it. But now the doctrine of the apostles of Jesus hurriedly undergoes a change! Do the aims of the apostles change likewise? No, they build up a new doctrine indeed, but only because their hopes have been frustrated; a doctrine of which immediately upon the death of Jesus they had not even begun to think, and which has every appearance of fictitious invention; therefore, we cannot believe otherwise than that the apostles of Jesus retained their previous aims and purposes, and sought to bring about their fulfilment as best they could, although in a different manner. Had we not already investigated this new doctrine to discover whether it were true or false, had we only been aware of the previous state of mind and desires of the apostles, namely, that they had hitherto been constantly looking forward to worldly grandeur and advantages in the kingdom of Jesus, which were put an end to by his death, and that upon this failure they brought out a new creed of Jesus as a spiritual, suffering Saviour, which until some time afterwards had never entered their heads, and that they then set themselves up as messengers and preachers of this gospel, we should still have justly and strongly suspected them to have been actuated by the old ambitious aim in their altered creed; because it

is much more probable that men should continue to act from exactly the same motives by which they have undeniably and invariably been actuated before, than that they should abandon them and take up others. But we have pursued a straighter course; we have, a short time ago, examined the foundation of this new structure thoroughly and by itself, and we have found it sham and fictitious throughout. And thus we see how impossible it is that the apostles could have had any other object in promulgating a new doctrine than their old one, namely, that of ultimately obtaining power and worldly advantages. For an intentional, deliberate fabrication of a false occurrence, can only spring from a preconceived resolve and from an object or motive harboured in the mind. He who diligently fabricates an untruth must have conceived a motive for so doing before he can concoct anything that will further his object; and the more bold and important this fabrication is, the deeper must the intention have been previously rooted in his mind, and of the more vital consequence must it have been to him. As, then, the new doctrine of the apostles was an undoubted fabrication, they must have invented it with a preconceived motive in their mind and will. Now as the former motives of the apostles, invariably and up to the time of the fabrication, had been aimed at worldly wealth and power, it follows with all moral certainty that the possession of worldly wealth and power was also the object of the apostles in the fabrication of

their new doctrine. Nor can we doubt that all the circumstances attending their conduct will verify this conclusion.

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#### SECTION LIV.

After the death of Jesus, great anxiety and fear prevailed among the disciples lest they should be pursued and punished, because they had followed a man who wanted to set himself up as a king, and had incited the people to rebellion. And although they pretended to be so brave, and to wish to share danger and death with Jesus, yes, even to be ready to fight with swords for him, they became cowards from the moment they saw that he was taken and likely to be condemned in earnest. "They all forsook him and fled;" and Peter who had summoned up courage enough to look on from a distance to see what the end of the disturbance might be, denied his master three times, and declared with an oath that he knew him not and knew nothing about him, because, you see, matters were running quite contrary to the desired object. Their twelve seats upon which they meant to sit and judge in the kingdom of Jesus were all at once overturned, and they no longer desired to sit at his right and at his left!

The alarm of the apostles lasted for some time after the death of Jesus. They left it to Joseph and Nicodemus and the women to attend to his burial, and kept away even from their last duties.

They assembled in secret places, locking the doors for fear of the Jews, for their common wants and interests made it advisable that they should hold together and keep of the same mind. By-and-by, one after another ventures abroad. They find that no further judicial enquiry is being made concerning them. They observe that the magistrates and rulers, after the execution of Jesus as the principal offender, consider his followers of little importance, and trouble themselves no more about them; perhaps also could not take further steps before Pilate. So they soon pluck up their courage, and begin to think of dangers overcome and future prospects of happiness. What was to be done? If they returned to their original occupations and trades, nothing but poverty and disgrace awaited them. Poverty, because they had forsaken all, particularly their nets, ships, and other implements; and, besides, they had grown out of the habit of working. And disgrace, because they had experienced such a tremendous downfall from their high and mighty expectations, and by their adherence to Jesus had become so familiar to all eyes, that everybody would have jeered and pointed at the pretended judges of Israel and intimate friends and ministers of the Messiah, who now had again become poor fishermen and perhaps even beggars. Both of these (poverty and disgrace) being exactly the opposite of their constant and long-cherished hopes were highly irritating and repugnant. On the other hand, they had imbibed, while with their master, a little fore-

taste of the importance to be gained by preaching, and had likewise ascertained that it was not an unremunerative occupation. Jesus himself had nothing. The oldest accounts of him state that he maintained himself by some trade up to the time of his ministry. However, in the thirtieth year of his life, he lays his trade aside and begins to teach. This would by no means necessitate want or starvation, although it did not promise a comfortable income, which, indeed, was not customary with the Jews, who would be all the more prodigal of charitable gifts. When he sojourned at Jerusalem a friend was sure to invite him to be his guest. From this also the saying arose that he was "a glutton and a wine bibber, and consorted with publicans and sinners." It is remarkable, too, that there were many Marthas who put themselves to a vast deal of trouble and pains to prepare delectable dishes for him. When he travelled, he was accompanied by such benevolent women as Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, Susanna, and several others who ministered unto him of their substance, as we are told by Luke (viii. 1—3). He was, therefore, provided not only with food, but also with money; and Judas, who carried the purse, was the cashier who bought and paid for everything requisite on the journey, and rendered an account of the outlay.

Whenever Jesus had his meals, the disciples did eat with him. Whenever Jesus travelled, their expenses were paid out of the common purse, so that

the kind gifts which were bestowed upon Jesus during his ministry were sufficient for the maintenance of at least thirteen people. And once, as if to ascertain whether want could be felt in such a course of life, some of the disciples were sent abroad through all the towns of Judea to announce the kingdom of God, without purse or scrip, and when on their return they were asked whether they had on any occasion suffered from hunger or want, they answered that they had never experienced either. The apostles then were very well aware that preaching, and particularly announcing the Messiah, would not do them any harm, and would not reduce them to beggary. It was the same with the honour and glory. They had seen that crowds of people ran after Jesus to listen to his teaching. They themselves had also been to some extent honoured and looked up to by the multitude, because as they were the confidential disciples and allowed to know more than others, their master had drawn a line between them and the people. They had also had a little foretaste of honour and glory when they went about as ambassadors and messengers of the Messiah, announcing the kingdom of Heaven. Above all, they knew how much influence a teacher could gain among the Jews, because the Pharisees, who were the most important and influential of the teachers, had substituted many of their own laws and sayings for those of the prophets, and had accustomed the people to accept them blindly. Such influence and import-

ance might rise considerably if at a time when prophecies and miracles had ceased, some one were to come forward and pretend to receive divine revelations and perform miracles, and the highest flight of all could be taken by one who turned to account the universal expectation of a Messiah, whose speedy return he would teach the people to look for, and make them believe that he carried the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. Such is human nature! He who can talk over people and lead them to believe that he can show them the way to everlasting bliss, a way that others do not know, or from which all others are shut out, but also a way that he can close as well as open, becomes thereby master over all else that man holds dear; over his thoughts, his freedom, his honour, and his fortune, for everything sinks into insignificance compared with this great and darling hope!

If we may be allowed to take a premonitory glance at the after-conduct of the apostles, the sequel shows that they really did tread in the paths leading to influence and aggrandisement; and gleaned from them as much power over the minds of ignorant people as they possibly could. They write to them jointly, as well as in their Council, dictating to all in the name of the Holy Ghost not only what they are to believe, but also what they are to do and what they are to avoid, and what they are to eat and to drink. They compel, they threaten, they give people over to Satan; they appoint bishops, presidents, and elders;



they force people to sell all their property and lay the proceeds at their feet, so that those to whom the lands belonged must henceforth be dependent on their charity ; to say nothing of others who had no possessions of the kind, and looked entirely to the beneficent hands of the apostles for support. Where they could not manage to introduce this commonwealth, they knew how to urge the collection of alms with so much religious zeal, that it was considered a small thing for any one to divide his worldly wealth with those through whom he had become a participator in heavenly and spiritual wealth. The apostles, then, had learnt by the little foretaste aforementioned, that by preaching and announcement of the kingdom of the Messiah, not only a sufficient maintenance, but also power, honour, and glory were attainable. They also possessed enough sense (as their future behaviour shows) to turn all these things to the very best advantage. No wonder then that their courage did not entirely leave them upon the first failure of their hopes of worldly wealth and power in the Messiah's kingdom, and that by a bold stroke they succeeded in paving a new way to them.

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#### SECTION LVI.

We have already remarked that at that time some of the Jews, though very few, believed in a twofold coming of the Messiah, who was first to

appear suffering and in misery, and again in power and glory. This belief exactly suited the purpose of the apostles. They saw that the game was not yet lost. The expectation of a future Messiah was still universally cherished, and although the Jews had been deceived in such persons as Theudas and Judas Galilæus, yet they never ceased to look for a Messiah in others and after a different fashion, as is shown by the later history of the Jews. The apostles could also feel sure that a great many of those who looked upon Jesus as a prophet, mighty in words and deeds, would henceforth catch at this doctrine, and would consider his suffering to have been part of his ministry, and the consequence of his first coming; and would, therefore, believe and expect his glorious second coming from Heaven to be all the nearer at hand. Neither could they doubt that many of the former adherents of Jesus, from the same fear of poverty and disgrace which had influenced themselves, would embark in the same boat with them, and would gladly believe whatever the apostles wished, so they could only convince them that they had not been mistaken and deceived. Behind locked doors, and so long as they were unanimous as to their common anxiety, they had good opportunities for deliberating and consulting one with another as to the best method of utilizing their idea to their own advantage. Above all things, it was necessary to get rid of the body of Jesus as speedily as possible, in order that they might say he had arisen and ascended into

heaven, and would promptly return from thence with great power and glory. This design of disposing of the body of Jesus was easy to carry out. It lay entombed in a rock situated in Joseph's garden. Both the master and the gardener allowed the apostles to visit the grave by day or by night. They betray themselves by owning that anyone might have secretly removed the body. They bore the accusation made by the rulers and magistrates of having actually done it themselves by night, and nowhere did they dare to contradict the common report. In short, all circumstances combine to show that they really did carry out their undertaking, and added it later on to the foundation-stone of their new doctrine. It appears in the sequel, also, that they were not very long about it, for they made away with the corpse in little more than twenty-four hours, before corruption had well set in; and when it became known that the body of Jesus was gone, they pretended to be *full of astonishment, and ignorant of any resurrection*, and proceeded with others to the spot in order to survey the empty tomb.\* As yet, it was too soon to

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\* I cannot endorse this part of Reimarus's theory. It seems more reasonable, and does less violence to the narrative, to believe that Jesus never died on the cross, but was resuscitated by the kind exertions of Joseph, and was enabled to escape from the tomb in the disguise of the gardener's dress; that he fled away into Galilee, and that the knowledge of his real survival of the crucifixion animated the disciples to expect the return in glory.—EDITOR.

make their assertion. They wait full fifty days before they attempt it, so that by-and-by the time might be past for an examination of the body, and for requiring them to produce openly the Jesus who had arisen. They wait fifty days that they may be able the more confidently to insist that they have seen him here and there, that he had been with them, had spoken to them, had eaten with them, and, lastly, had parted from them, and had ascended into heaven that he might soon return in glory.

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#### SECTION LVII.

What chance of success could they promise themselves by such an undertaking? Decidedly a good one. No one could now accuse them manifestly of fraud or falsehood. The *corpus delicti* was not to be found, and even if anyone should come and point out that it was somewhere to be found, more than fifty days had passed over since the death of Jesus, and decay must have done its work. Who would be able to recognise him now, and say "This is the body of Jesus"? The lapse of time secured them from detection, and made investigation useless. It also helped them to tell crowds of people how often and in what manifold ways he had appeared to them in the meanwhile, and what he had said to them; so that they could teach and arrange whatever seemed most desirable, as though they

were doing it according to the sayings and commands of Jesus, and if anyone after the fifty days should happen to ask: "Where is this Jesus who has arisen? Shew him to me," the answer was all ready: "He has now ascended into heaven." All depended on showing a bold front, and in affirming confidently that they had seen Jesus, had spoken with him, felt him, eaten and walked with him; and in these declarations they were all unanimous.

Such evidence could not easily be rejected, because truth, according to law, consisted in the evidence of two or three witnesses, and here there were *eleven* who stated one and the same thing. The resurrection in itself was not incredible to the greater mass, that is to say to the Pharisees; and the people, who believed that others had been raised from death by the prophets, consequently were forced to allow the possibility of the resurrection of Jesus in accordance with their own doctrine. The apostles, or rather Paul, as the cleverest of them, knew how to turn this to account for his defence and acquittal in a masterly style, when he stood upon his trial before the council. In order to set the Pharisees and Sadducees (who both sat in judgment) together by the ears and thereby to escape, he pretended at the time not to lay any particular stress upon the resurrection of Jesus, but he distorted the accusation brought against him, making it appear as though it referred to a common dogma. When he stood before the judges at Jerusalem

(Acts xxiii. 6) and "Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council: Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the multitude was divided. And the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose and strove saying: We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God." Paul speaks afterwards in the same manner at Cæsarea before the governor (Acts xxiv. 20): "Let these same (Jews) here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them: Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day." He speaks again in the same way before King Agrippa, and rebukes the Jews in his presence (Acts xxvi. 8): "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" What he meant was: "Why, it is your own confession of faith that there is a resurrection of the dead! There are examples of it in the Scriptures." Paul knew how to catch the Jews with their own dogmas; and when he comes upon the particular resurrection of Jesus, he has recourse to a *Batkol*, a voice which had called to him from Heaven. Now for such a *Batkol*, at that time, all honour was felt, so they

were perforce bound to show it due respect: "If a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God."

In a similar way the apostles often have recourse to heavenly voices, the Holy Ghost, angels, visions, ecstasies as high up as the third heaven, etc., whenever they want to give force to their pretences.

Those who still entertained regard and esteem for the person of Jesus, and who had heard of his many miracles, and of his having even re-awakened people from death, were all the more ready to believe that he had himself arisen from the dead. The apostles had besides learnt from their master how to perform miracles, or rather how to give the semblance of them to spectators, and I have shown elsewhere that it requires no skill whatever to relate miracles, or even to perform them, so there be plenty of confederates to assist by dexterity of speech and hand, and where they have to do with a people accustomed from youth up to believe in miracles. The apostles took pains to strengthen this readiness to believe, by recommending and urging the faith as an advantageous and a saving one, and denouncing unbelief by damnation. And when there was a question of proof, they had Moses and all the prophets to back them; for having acquired all the tricks of allegorical adaptation, it was not difficult for them to find passages applicable to Jesus as Messiah, to his birth, to his flight into Egypt, his sojourn at Nazareth, his deeds, his miracles, his crucifixion, burial,

resurrection, ascension, second coming, and, in short, to anything else they wanted.

This pharisaical art of reasoning was, in those days, looked upon as displaying the greatest cleverness, the deepest science, and, in short, as irresistible; where conviction was lacking, the apostles inclined people's minds to faith by the promise of rich rewards on the speedy return of Jesus to his glorious kingdom. For this kingdom, according to the opinion of the Jews and early Christians, was not to be merely an invisible kingdom of spiritual wealth in Heaven, which probably would have made less impression, but it was to be a visible kingdom lasting a thousand years upon earth, in which people were to eat and drink and live as before, only everything was to be in profusion, pleasure and happiness were to be boundless, and all enemies conquered and kept in subjection. Such promises could not fail to touch the senses. Such bright representations dazzle the desires (and thereby the mind) to such a degree, that people utterly neglect and despise all investigation, all searching after truth, and even present interests in the lively hope of a future abundance of wealth and happiness. In this way the apostles found opportunities of persuading many to give up their money and property to the common use for the sake of the immense reward awaiting them hereafter. This was a savings-bank in which everyone with whatever little fortune he possessed strove to buy shares in the speedily expected kingdom of



Heaven; and the division of these properties into alms enabled the apostles not only to exchange their poverty for affluence, but to allure to them thousands of poor people by relieving their immediate wants and promising them future plenty.

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### SECTION LVIII.

As the result shows that the apostles really did make use of these means, and that the same were successful in furthering their purposes, and as we have seen from whence the apostles obtained supplies to carry them out, there can be no doubt whatever that they had foreseen, lovingly talked over, and approved of these means in the days when they were all so united and friendly together. Did they then think that no difficulties would fall in the way and hinder the execution of their plans? We may reasonably suppose that they did expect difficulties to arise, but anyone who is acquainted with the then existing condition of the Jewish people will understand that such difficulties could not have appeared so insurmountable but that they might be vanquished by firmness and courage. They began, then, by merely announcing the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; a thing which to the Romans appeared simply ridiculous, and had no influence upon their government of the Jews. To the pharisaical Jews, however, it could not appear so incredible, and at all events could not

now be rejected, because the contrary could not possibly be manifestly shown after the body had been made away with for fifty days, and also because the fact had been confirmed in a more than legitimate manner, that is to say, by more than three witnesses. The apostles knew that they need have no fear of any regular and circumstantial judicial examination at which the evidence of each witness is taken upon oath, written down, and afterwards compared, to find whether a contradiction can be detected in one or more of the evidences, or in any of the alleged connecting circumstances. No, everything at that time in Roman law courts, not to mention those of the Jews, was carried on in a very tumultuous and superficial manner. How to encounter deceit and error in alleged facts by rational examination, was, as yet, not understood. The history of the New Testament and that of the apostles show well enough that such was the case when anyone stood before the council. If the apostles had let fall anything about the glorious second coming of Jesus to his kingdom in the clouds of heaven, it would likewise have been contemptuously regarded by the Romans and many Jews as a vain dream and a worthless pretence, the falsity of which time would expose. But should matters come to the worst, what had the apostles to fear from the Jewish rulers? The Jewish criminal court no longer existed. The rulers dared not put anyone to death; that was the affair of the Roman governor. The punishment of

flagellation might possibly be awarded to the apostles, or they might be driven from the synagogue and placed under the ban. That was all. They, however, made up their minds to run this risk, and their master having been forced to undergo the most humiliating of deaths by crucifixion, they determined to regard the lesser disgrace as an honour, and also prompted those who adopted the Christian faith with this spirit of martyrdom. However, as before said, the Jewish rulers could not punish them very severely, for their authority was quite brought down and public discipline was in the greatest confusion; and this indeed is very evident from two occurrences related in the Acts of the Apostles. When Paul was placed before the high council (Acts xxiii. 2) and began to argue, the high priest Ananias commanded that he should be struck on the mouth, probably because he had spoken without leave, which was considered unseemly in the accused, and also because he would not remain silent after having been previously forbidden to speak. Paul, however, has the impudence to rebuke and curse the high priest. He says: "God shall strike thee, thou whited wall, for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" What could be more audacious than this behaviour towards the most influential judge in the high council? And yet, although he was called to account for it, he was left unpunished. His apology, "I wist not, brethren, that it was

the high priest, for it is written, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people," would not have saved him. The excuse was a lame one, for the high priest could not have been so unknown to him, and if he did not recognise him as such, he must have known that he was a judge, who, belonging to the high council, must necessarily be a person of distinction, and, therefore, also his ruler, and here his judge. Was he then to be allowed, with the exception of the high priest, to curse any other members of the high council? He says himself: "It is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." Was not then every judge and member of that council a ruler of the Jewish people? Does not Paul smite himself with his own words? But as I said before, it was not his apology that obtained his freedom, but the weakness of the Jewish Synhedrion, and the small influence of all the magistracy, who, during the Roman dominion, dared not take a few abusive words too precisely. Paul was as well aware of this weakness as he was of their private disagreements and quarrels, for the council was composed of Pharisees and Sadducees, and in consequence the judges often differed in opinion and split into opposite parties, the end of which was that they let the accused go free. As then Paul knew that the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead, and that the Pharisees upheld it, he played the "divide." He took the side of the Pharisees: "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resur-

rection of the dead I am called in question." An uproar and a quarrelling immediately ensues among the judges themselves, the Pharisees take his part, they pronounce him innocent, and Paul's impeachment falls to the ground. So Paul laughs in his sleeve at the impotent Jewish council, and feels pretty confident that it can do him no great harm. Even when these religious dissensions were brought before the Roman council, verdict was always given in favour of the accused, for the Romans either looked upon them as senseless brawls, and neither could nor would judge their private sects and heretics; or, as on many accounts one must conclude, they encouraged these divisions and bickerings among the Jews, seeking thereby to bring the power and influence of their magistracy lower and lower down, in order to give themselves a better opportunity of ultimately bringing the people entirely under their yoke, which, indeed, they soon afterwards succeeded in accomplishing.

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#### SECTION LIX.

Civil discipline was also at that time in a very bad state among the Jews. People could do almost what they liked without fear of punishment. I do not, however, mean to imply that the apostles escaped censure in introducing this community of property, for such a state of things must necessarily be dis-

advantageous to the prosperity of a nation. Those citizens who are in easy circumstances, and who sell all their goods and chattels, lands and houses, to place the money they realize into a common bank, are thereby withdrawn from the State. They become poor, and cannot in any way help to support the universal burdens, or assist in furthering the growth of the State by business and trade. Private persons become lords and masters of all the wealth in which the treasury and universal affairs have a just participation and claim, and these people are thus enabled to draw towards them thousands of other citizens, who henceforth become dependent upon them and are obliged to follow the beck and call of their leaders and benefactors; also, by being deprived of dominion and obedience to the magistracy and rulers, they are even placed in opposition to the latter. However, I will not demand from the Jewish polity the prevention of such injury to the public good. The apostles felt themselves at liberty to utilize this carelessness and confusion, and in the midst of one State began to erect another State, in which religion and opinion, possessions and their appropriation, and consequently the behaviour of their adherents no longer depended upon the injunction or prohibition of the laws, but upon the beck and call of the apostles, and by them was used against the injunction or prohibition of the laws, under the pretext that one must obey the law of God before the law of man. It certainly is most astonishing that at

the very commencement of this apostolic institution, two persons lost their lives one after the other in the chamber of the apostles, from whence they were carried out dead, and that no judicial enquiry or examination ensued as to why and by what means these two persons met with their death, for such an event must of necessity have aroused suspicion. In Acts v. 1, Ananias and Sapphira agree to take shares in the apostolic bank. They resolve with the foreknowledge of the apostles to follow the example of others and sell their possessions. This of itself was a thing contrary to the law of Moses, and by which the apostles had upset the entire constitution of the Jewish polity, for, according to the command of Moses, each person was to retain in his possession the inheritance of his fathers.

These two persons must have observed that when once others had been deprived of their property, means of subsistence were rather sparingly forthcoming. For this reason they persuade themselves not to give up the whole of their paternal inheritance, but to reserve a portion of it in case of need. The Holy Ghost was not wanted here to tell Peter how much they had received for their lands, for he knew the value and the price of them. He asks, How much money? counts up the sum Ananias has brought, and as he perceives that part of it is missing, he is dissatisfied, he must have it all. He calls Ananias to account, assumes an air of great importance, as though it were one and the same thing to lie to *him* as to lie to the Holy

Ghost. In short, the man falls down, God knows how, dead upon the ground. People are called in who lift him up, receive orders to carry him out and bury him immediately, and in three hours the whole business is accomplished. Meanwhile, the wife Sapphira appears before the apostles, and is likewise asked whether the lands have not produced more, and when she denies having received a larger sum, the same fate awaits her. She falls down dead, is carried out and buried with her husband. I will not enquire what became of the money laid at the apostles' feet, for although it was not the whole fortune of Ananias and Sapphira, it is very apparent that the apostles did not restore it to the heirs, but considered it a good prize and kept it. How is it possible in a town or State possessing any sort of law or order that two well-known persons, a man and his wife, should die in a room in broad daylight, be put out of the way, and buried in two or three hours without any enquiry being made as to the manner by which they lost their lives? Could this happen without presentiment, without collusion, without painful examination on the part of those present? In so disorganised a state of affairs, what might not the apostles venture to undertake and to do?

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#### SECTION LX.

It is evident from the above that the apostles had no cause to fear that any great difficulties



would present themselves in their way. We will see how they really went to work. After all had been unanimously pre-arranged by those most influential among them, they assembled about a hundred and twenty of the remaining disciples (Acts ii. 1), some of whom probably honestly imagined that Jesus really had arisen from the dead, and had been seen by the others. In the place of Judas another apostle was ordained, and eventually, on the fiftieth day after Easter, the first outbreak of their intention took place with a miracle in which four other miracles are remarkable. 1st. A sound as of a rushing mighty wind, which filled all the house. 2nd. The appearance on the apostles of cloven tongues like as of fire. 3rd. That "*It* (the wind, I suppose) sat upon each of them." 4th. That they began to speak with other tongues; so that Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Jews, Cappadocians, Pontians, Asiatics, Phrygians, Pamphyliaus, Egyptians, Lybians, Cyrenians, Romans, strange Jews, Cretes, and Arabians, all these heard the apostles speak and praise God in their own language. Upon which "they were amazed and marvelled," saying one to another: "What is the meaning of this?" Others mocking said: "These men are full of new wine." So it goes on until Peter gets up and produces evidence from Joel, showing that "this miracle should come to pass in the last days," and further evidence from the Psalms showing that Jesus must have arisen, because David said: "Thou wilt not suffer thy

Holy one to see corruption." And after this, "they that gladly accepted the word were baptized, and the same day were added unto them about three thousand souls." Now if the object of God was to make the resurrection clear and credible to man, why should he have shown Jesus after his resurrection to no other men than the apostles, and afterwards, when he was no longer extant, announce the resurrection by a miracle? Would not the resurrection have been believed quite naturally and with universal approbation without any miracle, if God had, after the crucifixion and burial, allowed Jesus to be seen and touched alive in the Temple before the Synhedrion, and before the eyes of all the people?

To reject an easy, natural, and powerful method for an unnatural, incomprehensible, and round-about method, is not consistent with the wisdom of God. Miracles shown forth in such a manner are extremely suspicious. Men who would establish by miracles a thing which, if clear and true, they could and ought manifestly and visibly to prove, invariably seek to work upon the credulity of ignorant or weak-minded people, who are most easily caught by what is most incomprehensible to them. We will now look a little closer into this great miracle. I do not know whether Luke, who relates it, was himself present on the occasion, but whether he was or not, it is to be regretted that he has not detailed in a more intelligible manner how such impossible things came to pass. We need not

waste time over the "sound as of a mighty rushing wind," because a noise of that kind is so very easily produced; but who can comprehend what Luke means by saying that the tongues seen among the apostles were cloven like the flames of fire? The word tongue cannot here, as it does elsewhere, mean language, because we cannot see language; besides, it would not correspond with the description of these cloven tongues like forked flames of fire in the shape of tongues. Could they have been the tongues of the apostles themselves? They might possibly have shot them forth from their throats with such force and speed as to resemble the cloven tongue of a serpent, and during the protusion might also have had a fiery appearance; or could they have been strange tongues, the shape and colour of which were seen upon the apostles? And whereabouts were they seen?—over their heads, as they are commonly represented in pictures, or shooting forth like flames from their mouths, as is more likely to have been the case? And who and what placed the tongues upon each of the apostles? Was it the wind? For nothing else is mentioned as having done so. The whole description, unlike that of a true history, is more that of a prophetic vision intended to represent the prompting of foreign languages by the Holy Ghost. The mighty wind represents the Holy Ghost blowing into the apostles and kindling a blazing fire which shoots forth in forked flames from their mouths, signifying the gift of various foreign

languages. It is a good picture of the imaginary vision of a prophetic writer, but we cannot by any possible means make it rhyme with a true history. And why should some of those present have mocked at the apostles, and supposed them to be drunken with wine if these miraculous tongues were indeed visible to the spectators? The thing contradicts itself. Let the mockery of men go as far as it will, such a visible supernatural event could not have failed to produce universal dismay, amazement, and terror. It certainly would not have given rise to any mockery. Mockery soon stops if one sees clearly a marvellous thing which cannot be mistaken for delusion or imposition. This first miracle then would appear to have been concocted for the purpose by Luke with little imagination and less forethought; and this very mockery, coming from the hearers and spectators, shows us sufficiently that whatever they really did see and hear, must have had every appearance of juggling and deception. Otherwise, why should they have mocked and said that the apostles were full of new wine? If the apostles had spoken one after another rationally, distinctly, and decently, like reasonable, well-conducted, sober men, this mockery could not have taken place. We must, therefore, conclude that to all outward appearance they did behave like intoxicated men. That is to say, that they spake and shouted confusedly one amid the other, as drunkards are apt to do, and at the same time made extravagant gestures such as

drunkards are apt to make. It is easy to see that the apostles put on a prophetic enthusiasm in which people feign to rave and to be mad, for in “Hith nabbe,” to prophecy and to be mad are expressed by the same word. Further, it is easy to see that in their feigned enthusiasm they all shouted at the same time in a loud voice and in confusion certain strange syllables and words, so that any credulous person in the tumult and in the babel of sounds might easily fancy he recognised his own or any other language.

This perfectly accounts for the mockery upon which Paul also throws much light in an epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xiv.) when he has not the courage utterly to forbid the speaking with tongues, as such a command would have been equivalent to accusing the apostles—with all their miraculous Corinthian gifts—of juggling and imposition, but, nevertheless, he gives them to understand that he deems it advisable to refrain from speaking in “unknown tongues which no man understandeth, and which, except they be interpreted, are not edifying to the Church.” For it appears that some members of the Church had endeavoured to make themselves conspicuous by this miraculous gift of tongues, and in a fit of inspiration had given vent to meaningless and extraordinary sounds, by which the ignorant might imagine them to be speaking in foreign languages. It is also possible that their imagination became so excited, that in a sort of ecstacy they gave utterance to these strange sounds,

for of such ecstasies there are numerous examples. At all events, we may be sure that they (the sounds) did not proceed from God, or from the Spirit of God, who would certainly not waste his knowledge of tongues where it would not be edifying, and where Paul saw reason to find fault with it. Let us, however, imagine what (on account of the feigned inspiration and the mockery it occasioned) I cannot believe, namely, that the apostles did in an intelligible, orderly manner, one after the other, utter divers sentences in foreign tongues.

Would it not have been perfectly possible that some of them, in their intercourse with so many people of different nations, had become familiar with such sentences, or had taken pains to acquire such sentences or words to help them in carrying out their intentions? Where is the great miracle in this? And how bad the argument:—

Certain persons have spoken in foreign tongues;  
Therefore Jesus has arisen from the dead.

“That is all very well,” we shall be answered, “but such tongues! tongues so numerous and so little known! These Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Cretes, Arabians, Cappadocians, Asiatics, and so forth, all understood the apostles, and heard them praise God each in his own language, and thereupon three thousand souls were baptised and added to the Christian Church. Certainly there could have been no deception in this! A strong impression *must* have been produced upon all by such an

immense conversion, except upon the mockers who did not understand it."

But Luke here forgets that he has represented the apostles as sitting in a room. He says at the beginning of his recital: "And suddenly there came a sound as of a mighty rushing wind, which filled all the house in which they sat" (Acts ii. 2). It was the custom of the apostles to assemble in the upper chamber of the house ἐν τῷ ὑπερφῶφ, immediately under the flat roof. My gracious!\* How could upwards of three thousand people have found room there? For these three thousand do not constitute all the persons present. The three thousand were those who "gladly accepted his word and were baptized" (v. 41), so there must have been others who did not accept the word of Peter, and besides these the assembled company numbered a hundred and twenty (Acts i. 15). So we may reckon that there were altogether about four thousand people. Such a number would require a large church. How does Luke contrive to cram them all into this one chamber of the apostles? I would willingly help him out of the difficulty by suggesting that perhaps the greater number of people might have been outside in the street or in the

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\* I am at a loss for an interjection here. The literal translation of the word Reimarus uses:—"Mein!" would be "mine!" or "my!" It is an exclamation which a German child would make on hearing the wonders of a fairy tale, and is peculiar to Reimarus in his quaint style of writing.—TRANSLATOR.

courtyard. But my suggestion would remove all cause for the conversion. How could people who stood in the street or in the courtyard, looking up at the room, see, hear, and know what miraculous things were going on up there, what languages were being spoken, or what the meaning of the speeches was? Yet Luke introduces them as saying: "Are not all these which speak Galilæans? and how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?" (Acts ii. 7, 8.) No, I cannot help Luke. He has forgotten what he has written, and to make the conversion appear as important as possible, he states the number of converted to have been over three thousand, and it never occurs to him that he has seated his apostles in a *chamber*. It is immaterial to him how these three or four thousand people are to find standing-room! And how will he convince us that three to four thousand people could congregate immediately upon a mighty wind? For even if the wind had made itself heard with a "mighty rushing sound" through the whole town, there was no reason why the inhabitants should be very much surprised at it, or why they should run off to one particular house in the town. If, on the other hand, this mighty wind only sounded in this one particular house, how could so many thousand people, some of them at the uttermost ends of the town, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Cretes, Arabians, Phrygians, Cappadocians, etc., have known that it sounded? This is past all comprehension. Besides, the assembled



congregation is supposed to consist of devout men, Jews and comrades of Jews. How comes it that on the first day of Pentecost instead of hastening, as devout men would, to the Temple or the synagogue, they hurry, out of sheer curiosity, from the most distant quarters of the town to a house in or over which a mighty wind has been heard to sound? There is no rhyme in this.

Events follow with such marvellous speed one upon the other throughout Luke's history, that it would seem as though everything were influenced by the wind. "When this was noised abroad the multitude came together." It is also remarkable that this multitude of people in Jerusalem are not native Jews; on the contrary, they are strange Jews of every nation under heaven, fifteen of which are mentioned; just as if these had previously and expressly been summoned to become aural witnesses of the new "polyglotta," and just as if the native Jews had not been invited. But as, in this instance, the news came to the people's ears accidentally, and as out of about one thousand Jews who came from Palestine to the feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem, none could justly be called strange Jews, there could not at most have been more than three or four strangers among a number of three or four thousand casually congregated people. How is it then here that to one native Jew there are fourteen strange Jews, in the enumerating of whom Luke is obliged to exhaust all his geography? This is hard to believe. It behoves a

writer who relates a miraculous event before all things to explain clearly the possibility of a thing which in itself appears incredible, but here one not only sees that the several occurrences recorded could not have taken place, but one also sees clearly and distinctly by all the circumstances combined that the story is self-refuting. Thus it is with all these miracles. Nothing is easier for the writer than to imagine them. It is no more trouble to him to put down three thousand than three hundred, his pen governs and orders all nature, he makes the wind to sound when and where he lists, he confounds languages, and in the space of a moment assembles a multitude of every nation under the sun. But here and there the confusion of his imagination *will* peep out, entangling itself hopelessly in contradictions. Such tales can only be believed blindfold by a sanctimonious simplicity. To a healthy mind they are a mockery and a laughing-stock.\* And although Luke imagined thirty years afterwards, when the age allotted to man was well nigh spent, that he could with impunity write miracles and unscrupulously circulate them in the world, there were then, as there are now, some sensible people who could perceive imposition and falsehood in all their nooks and crannies, and who readily knew how to distinguish them from the truth. I shall pass over the rest of the miracles as unworthy of notice; it is probably sufficient for my readers, as

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\* Or, sound reason laughs them to scorn.

it is for myself, to have found that such is the case by our investigation of this first miracle. We now know how much truth it contains. Doubtless a good many may be deducted from the three thousand who so speedily adapted themselves to the baptism and belief in Jesus; and the motive which swayed the remainder was not the miracle, but the sweet prospect of enjoying the common wealth which was being so liberally distributed to all that they eat and drank together, and wanted for nothing, as we see by the following (v. 42—45): “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers . . . . and all that believed were together and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as they had need. . . . Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man as he had need.” (Acts iv. 34, 35.)

Behold the real reason of the conflux! a reason which operates and has operated at all times so naturally, that we need no miracle to make everything comprehensible and clear. This is the real mighty wind that so quickly wafted all the people together. This is the true original language that performs the miracles.

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